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WHO WAS THIS
NAZARENE?

WHO WAS THIS NAZARENE?

*A Challenging and Definitive
Biography of the Master*

by

ALBERT FIELD GILMORE, *Litt.D.*

*Author of East and West of Jordan
The Bible: Beacon Light of History
Links in Christianity's Chain, etc.*


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*To those seekers after Truth, who
will find in the life-story of
Christ Jesus, Son of God, the Way
to the Kingdom, where the real man,
God's likeness, forever abides.*

*“And I will pray the Father, and he
shall give you another Comforter, that
he may abide with you for ever; even
the Spirit of truth.”*

John 14:16, 17

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Foreword

IN VIEW of the fact that there have already been written more than 3000 "lives" of Christ Jesus, the query is justifiably raised, Why another? All the affirmative books, that is, those that deal specifically with the life of the Nazarene as an historical character, may be broadly divided into two groups. First, those written about the thesis that Jesus is "very God of very God," that all his "supernatural" and mighty works were done because of his divine selfhood and consequently were impossible of reproduction by any person, that is, by any mortal personality. The second group includes those who deny the "miracles," that is, who refuse to accept the healings and other deeds that may not be explained through the logic of material law; in other words, by "rationalism."

A few books have been written which deny that such a man ever lived on earth. The assertion is that tradition has built up a personality termed Jesus, a myth, a figment of the imagination. These negative statements are not included in the above classification.

This book is written out of a deep conviction that Jesus was not God, but that as the Son of God he became the great Teacher and demonstrator of divine Power, because he was able to overcome material law through his understanding of spiritual Law, the Law which governs God's Kingdom. As the Christ, he was divinely endowed and therefore able to do all that is related of him in the Scriptures. Paul was fully aware of the facts concerning him whose ardent follower he became. Did the Apostle not declare: "For the law of the Spirit of

life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death"?¹ Moreover, Paul was not only aware of the existence of this "law of the Spirit of life," but he recognized and acknowledged the great service it had rendered him. It had made him free from the beliefs of sin and the effect of those beliefs, the death that follows such belief.

Furthermore, the Twelve disciples sent out by Jesus, and also the Seventy, were instructed to repeat his works. That they succeeded there is good evidence. And the evidence points to the fact that Jesus was conscious of God's omnipotence and forever presence; that this knowledge of God and the divine economy was the Truth, the truth about God, man, and the universe of reality, the truth that Jesus declared should bring freedom to mortals; that this knowledge was spiritual understanding of the Christ. And when his followers gained this understanding, they were in some measure able to reproduce his works.

Simon recognized Jesus' true character on that momentous occasion when, in response to the Master's query, "But whom say ye that I am?" the impetuous disciple responded, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."² That Jesus accepted this answer in the fullness of its tremendous significance, none can gainsay, for he replied "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

Jesus further emphatically expressed his complete approval of Simon's words thus: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock (the Christ, Truth, which Peter had discerned and proclaimed) I

¹ Romans 8:2.

² Matthew 16:15 ff.

will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." No stronger language could be employed to state a fact, an unimpeachable truth. Not God but "the Christ, the Son of the living God," was the concept of his Master which Peter so emphatically put forth and which elicited so definite an approval from Jesus. If there were no other statement in the New Testament regarding the status and character of the Nazarene, this alone should settle for all time this most important question.

But there is other evidence to be adduced, overwhelming in its definiteness, as to the status of Jesus and his relation to his divine source. Who knew best who he was, whence he came, and what his relation was to his divine source? This man himself, who has come to be known as Lord and Saviour to countless millions, or the learned men who gathered at Nicaea, the religio-philosophers who had become quite entangled in the net of their own metaphysical discussions? Said they, "Jesus is God, very God of very God." These were the followers of Athanasius, the group which prevailed in determining the chief stones in the foundation of Christian doctrine which have prevailed even to the present day. On the other hand, Arius, leader of a minority group, held Jesus to be a creature of God—not God, but the creature of God. This doctrine prevailed in the Eastern Church; the Athanasian dogma in the Western Church. The Nicene Creed, however, should not be regarded too dogmatically. It grew out of the concepts of the times held by men of a lofty purpose, striving to determine the nature of this marvelous man and properly to evaluate his works.

But what does the record say? What was the testimony of the man himself about whom waged this significant conflict? What said he? "I and my Father are

one.”³ “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.”⁴ “The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.”⁵ Again and again did he utter words which definitely fixed his status—the Son of the Father, and that Father the living God.

On the other hand, not once in all his recorded words is there a hint that Jesus thought himself to be, or called himself, God. Was it because the spiritual impetus which enabled him to destroy divers forms of evil, to heal sickness and sin and even to revive the dead, the impetus which had enabled his followers also to reproduce in goodly measure the works that he did, had been lost, because these works were no longer a present practice, that the makers of the Nicene doctrine declared the divinity of him who had done such marvelous things? Was it their way of escape from the responsibility imposed by the Master on his followers, upon them “that believe”?

While one may not unconditionally declare this, yet it offers great possibilities by way of explanation of the causes that established as a dogma of the Christian Church a doctrine quite contrary to the assertions of the Founder himself. Be that as it may, it has persisted to the present day, and even as late as 1938 was made the basis of the invitation to representatives of the Christian denominations to meet in Ecumenical Convention in Madras.

How, then, did this man, born of a woman, become the Christ? Through his unparalleled and unprecedented manifestation of the Christ, the Truth about God and man. Simon, recognizing this, bestowed upon the Master the title, “Christ, Son of the living God.”⁶ And

³ John 10:30.

⁴ John 5:17.

⁵ John 14:10.

⁶ Matthew 16:16.

gradually, it seems, the title became a fixture, and the son of Mary became known as Jesus Christ, or more properly, Christ Jesus.

Let none believe that this conclusion detracts in the slightest measure from the holy nature of the Master, or from the significance of his mission. Rather does it enhance his position as Way-Shower to humanity out of its self-imposed bondage into the glorious freedom which characterizes the sons of God. Jesus' mission was to reveal God to mortals, to interpret Divinity to humanity. Through his words and works he made manifest the divine qualities, and the effectiveness of Christ, Truth, as the healer of sin and woe.

So successful was he in his holy mission that he became the Founder of the world's most potent religious movement of all time. Venerated, loved, worshiped more intensely than any other who has ever appeared on earth, Jesus has become Lord and Saviour, Way-Shower and Exemplar to uncounted millions. Why? Because he was so conscious of the divine presence, of spiritual Law and its operations, that he was able to destroy the untoward conditions which so generally encompass humanity, and to lead all ready to be led into that state of consciousness which constitutes the Kingdom of Heaven. He taught most effectively the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man; that God is Spirit and Life and Love, and, through His Christ, is ever present to meet the human need.

Surely no mission could be higher or holier than that upon which Christ Jesus entered and which he so triumphantly performed.

ALBERT FIELD GILMORE

Boston

I

What of the Christ?

THE author of this book approaches the subject conscious of the responsibility attached to so great a purpose—adequate analysis and evaluation of the life, character, and mission of Jesus the Christ. It seems beyond the possibility of language properly to express the quality and importance of Jesus' words and works. In full recognition of the difficulties confronting him, however, the author has undertaken the task with deep humility, but in the hope of sharing with those who may read this volume something of the blessing, the peace, the joy, the gratitude, which he has derived from understanding Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, and from the application of this understanding to the solution of human problems.

During his student days and young manhood the author sought persistently for a concept of God and His Christ that would meet his sense of truth and logic. But he sought in vain until in middle life there came the revelation which has answered his quest in every particular. For him, reason and revelation are completely reconciled in the understanding of the Christ-presence, which heals the sick, reforms the sinner, and comforts the sorrowing.

Briefly the teaching is this: Jesus, born of a Virgin mother, became increasingly conscious of his divine nature, and of the Christ-presence, the presence of spiritual truth, the Comforter, operating through unchanging infinite Law. In fact, Jesus became so completely conscious of the divine Presence as omnipotent and avail-

able to meet the human need, whatever its form or nature, that he was enabled to perform his many mighty works. Through this irrefutable proof of the truth of his teachings, he became the Way-Shower to humanity of the method of escape from every constricting belief—from sickness, sin, lack, misery, poverty, and even from the belief in death itself as a real and inevitable experience. So complete was his demonstration of divine power in the destruction of material law, so adequately did he express Christ, Truth, the truth about God, man, and the universe, that he became known as the Christ, the anointed one.¹

This Christ, Truth, which Jesus expressed so triumphantly, gave him power over material conditions of every type, over so-called material law, however manifested. He was more conscious of God's presence and power than any other, and he utilized this understanding in all that he did and taught others to do. He instructed his immediate disciples in the use of this divine power: instructed them how to utilize divine Law to the end that they were able in goodly measure to repeat many of his works. Furthermore, he declared in unmistakable terms that similar works could be performed by those who should believe in him, that he was the Christ, the Son of God.

This recognition of Jesus as the Christ is the basis of this review of his life and works, which sets forth, however inadequately, the significance of his priceless mission and the fact that the Christ is available here and now and forever to solve humanity's problems.

¹ See *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, by Mary Baker Eddy.

II

Christ Jesus, Son of God

THAT the question of the historicity of Christ Jesus should ever be raised, has a strange sound in the ears of a Christian. That there should be even the slightest doubt as to the life on earth of the Founder of the religion which he has accepted and undertaken to make his rule of life is quite beyond his comprehension. Did Jesus live? Did such a man nineteen hundred years ago teach the most precious truths ever spoken by human lips; did he perform the most marvelous works of all time? Was there such a man? Did Jesus live?

To the Christian these queries are meaningless, absurd. Not so to the unbeliever, to him who has looked upon the Gospels with critical, perhaps with cynical and doubting eye. With such, the query is raised, and with what to him seems excellent reason. He would probably scorn to accept as Exemplar, and disdain to become the follower of one about whom so little is really known, that is, about one who has so small a place in the history of his own times. It is to answer the doubtful one, the dissenter, that there are briefly placed before him here the evidences contained in history itself.

What, then, is the place of Christ Jesus in early history? What are the proofs apart from the Scriptural record that such a man ever lived? In the year 110 A.D. Pliny the Younger, Roman proconsul of Bithynia, a province in Asia Minor, wrote to his Emperor such an account of the happenings in his province as would be of interest to the government in Rome. Pliny was a

literary man of note, serving in the capacity of Roman overlord, perhaps for the salary attached to the office, a subsidy which enabled him to continue his literary labors.

In one letter to the Emperor Trajan he asks for instructions as to what course he shall take toward the Christians. He tells of the rapid growth of these devotees of a peculiar religion, who sometimes assemble to sing a hymn to Christ, as their Leader, or god, is termed. As a worthy official of the Empire, eager and instant in the repression of any group which might become a menace to the welfare of his country, he has called certain of these strange worshipers to his quarters and questioned them. Some quickly repudiate the charges that they are given to worship of strange gods, and pour a libation and burn incense to the Emperor. Others refuse, and because of their stubbornness are tortured.

As Pliny wrote this soon after the end of the first century, it is probably the first extant historical mention of the followers of Christ Jesus. It establishes the fact of the existence at that time in Asia Minor of bodies of Christians, and that their numbers were increasing. Thus is substantiated in secular history the various missionary activities of Paul and the others in Asia Minor, as related in the Book of Acts and in Paul's Epistles. To those requiring evidence apart from the Gospel narrative, here is conclusive proof of the development of a sect whose Founder bore the name of Christ.

Another Roman historian bears even more convincing testimony. Tacitus, a contemporary of Pliny, writes of the burning of Rome, when Nero was Emperor. To deny the rumor that the fire had been set by himself, the Emperor charges that the Christians are guilty of the crime, and puts many to death. The account states that

the origin of this name was one Christ, who in the reign of Tiberius was condemned to death by Pontius Pilate, Procurator of Judea. Tacitus also relates that in spite of the repressive measures taken against them, this revolting superstition developed anew, overflowed Judea, its birthplace, and extended even as far as Rome. The charges of arson were not proved, and the accusation was shifted to the sweeping assertion that Christians were enemies of the whole human race.

Tacitus was known for his accuracy. That Christ had been crucified was not a mere rumor, but an historical fact. But, impartial historian that he was, relating objectively the common belief regarding the situation, that his heart is touched by the horror of the persecutions is apparent from a passage which follows. "Guilty though they were and much as they merited death, the fact that they suffered not for the common weal, but through the ferocity of one man, awakens pity for them in all hearts."

Here again is proof that goes still further, for it deals with Jesus himself. Moreover, it brings to the surface the great fact of the inevitable enmity between the empires of this world and the Kingdom of Spirit. It is an eternal enmity, one that will endure so long as evil, through its innate conceit, believes it can overthrow the Kingdom of good. How little has humanity awakened to the great fact that only good is omnipotent and by that very token, evil is impotent, that is, in its efforts to destroy good!

Contemporaneous with Pliny and Tacitus, but alive a decade longer than either, was another Roman historian, Suetonius, who wrote biographies of both Nero and Claudius. He, too, makes mention of the persecution of Christians. In his *Life of Claudius*, he writes, "The Jews, incited by a certain *Chrestos*, continually rebelled,

and he [Claudius] drove them out of Rome.” Here, manifestly, the word *Chrestos* represents a distorted form of *Christus*, meaning Jesus. Tertullian also wrote of the followers of Jesus as Christians, indicating that this was not an uncommon term applied to the followers of “Christ.”

One would expect that the famous Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, would have dealt more fully with Jesus and his career than the later Romans. Josephus was born shortly after the crucifixion and lived until near the end of the first century. It should be recognized that Christianity was but a small movement during the period of Josephus’ life, and it is quite understandable that he should have paid so little attention to it when writing an exhaustive history of the times. We are inclined to judge the importance of Christianity in all the centuries from its great development and influence today, obviously an improper standard of judgment for first-century happenings.

In the *Antiquities* of Josephus are but two references to Jesus, one bitterly hostile, the other so friendly as to stamp it most certainly as a later interpolation by some Christian hand. But the authentic one, notwithstanding its lack of understanding of the character of the man whom it denounces, has the definite and unanswerable result of writing Jesus into secular history.

There was such a man. Josephus’ words are: “Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned.”¹ In these words

¹ R. Worthington, *Josephus*, translated by William Whiston, R. Worthington Co., 1887, New York, pp. 529-530.

did the Jewish historian fix the fact that Jesus lived and that his followers were persecuted, although his facts are not in accord with the Gospel narratives, which probably were written somewhat earlier.

Other and very important evidence that Jesus was an historic personage is found in the Talmud, the holy book of Jewish law. While the several references are all critical, hateful, in view of the spotless character of the Nazarene, yet they furnish irrefutable proof of the historicity of the man who names the Christian era. The character of the references perfectly illustrates the type of enmity toward him whose only mission was in doing good, in relieving humanity of its burden of sin and sorrow.

Justin Martyr, of Hellenic birth, who became a Christian in the first half of the second century, also knew of the Jewish accounts of Jesus and his followers. The weight of the combined statements constitutes irrefutable proof of the historicity of Jesus. It fixes him as an historical character, entirely apart from the Gospel statements.

Apart from the Four Gospels, readers of the Book of Acts and the Epistles of Paul are convinced from these accounts alone that Jesus lived, taught, and suffered crucifixion. Can one imagine that Paul, a sturdy Roman citizen, once a Jewish zealot, converted by a vision in which Jesus appeared, to become one of the most zealous of the Master's followers, would have suffered endless hardships, even martyrdom, for the poor privilege of serving the cause of a mythical personage who had lived only in the minds of adherents of a baseless tradition? All the arguments against the historicity of Jesus the Christ fall before the weight of evidence, evidence unimpeachable.

III

The Background of Christianity

THE background, social, political, and religious, against which Jesus' teachings were projected is worthy of exploration, the better to understand the advent of the Messiah, the character of his reception, and the rise of the forces that led to his crucifixion. First, the political. It is reasonably certain that Herod the Great died in the year 4 B.C. The time of year is uncertain. During the thirty-seven years of his reign, Palestine had been a federated state under allied rulers, Jewish and Roman. The authority of the former within his province was practically complete. The only exception to his total overlordship was the influence exercised by the Roman Government in the form of a treaty making him in a measure vassal to the Emperor.

Under this agreement he could wage no war, and a tax upon the people was laid and collected by Rome. The collection of this tax was "farmed out" to some resident of the country who increased at will the amount of the impost. While in the main this tax was regarded as just, yet the methods of collecting it were dishonest and such as to render the tax collector ostracized and degraded.

After the death of Herod, the treaty with Rome expired, and, pending the development by the Emperor Augustus of a plan for the government of the region, Palestine came more directly under Roman authority. As the Emperor distrusted the ability of Herod's sons to govern so important a country, then also much larger in population than at present, the territory was divided into

four parts. Judea and Samaria were placed under the rule of Archelaus. The northern portion, Galilee, and the southeastern portion, Perea, were given to another son of Herod Antipas (the Herod of the Gospels), "that fox" spoken of by Jesus. Philip, another son, was made ruler over the northeast portion. From him, Caesarea Phillipi received its name.

None of these rulers was designated as "king." The ruler of Judea was known as *ethnarch*, while his brothers were designated as *tetrarchs*. None of these regions had a Roman governor, and therefore no Roman soldiers were quartered therein so long as this arrangement remained.

Of the three governors, Archelaus proved a failure and was removed by Augustus in 6 A.D. Thereupon, the Emperor appointed a procurator over that portion of Palestine, Judea and Samaria, which became a minor Roman province. Pilate, a later procurator, served for ten years, probably from 25 to 35 A.D. These procurators did not live in Jerusalem, and it seems that their chief duty was to see that the interests of Rome were not impaired. The government was for the most part carried on by the local authorities, the traditional Jewish officials whose authority was exercised through the Sanhedrin.

The great Sanhedrin at Jerusalem consisted of seventy members, priests and elders, selected from the aristocrats of society. The high priest was the leader of this body. In many local cases its authority was supreme, yet after the death of Herod the Great, it no longer had the power of life and death over the people, and its decisions in civil cases were subject to revision, even to veto, by the Roman authority. In smaller communities a Sanhedrin of seven to twenty members exercised similar authority. But with the authority to lay and collect taxes in the hands of Rome, the power of the Sanhedrins was greatly

limited, for the power to tax a people lies at the very base of political authority. The people were taxed into poverty. High sums collected by Herod had enabled him to build magnificent structures in Jerusalem and other centers of Palestine, so magnificent that Herod became known as "the Great."

Yet Roman rule had its advantages. Roads were improved and patrolled, thus rendering travel safer. Pirates were swept from the seas, and both life and property were rendered more secure. Outwardly, order and justice in goodly measure prevailed.

Outside Palestine were the Jews of the Dispersion, who became the mediators between the foreign influences and the Jews of the Holy City. They greatly outnumbered the Jews of Palestine. Josephus says that three millions (probably an exaggeration) of these came to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover in 66 A.D. That they were numerous Paul found on his missionary journeys, and these did much to prepare the people for the reception of the Gospel preached by the Great Apostle.

The influence, however, was reciprocal, for these Jews brought back to Jerusalem a type of liberalism which had gone far toward breaking down much of the law and dogma which had held Judaism in narrow bondage. The influx of these influences, reinforced by Hellenism, brought division and perplexity to the people. They were confused and without definite leadership when Jesus appeared. He taught them the only remedy, the substitution of love and kindness and tolerance and mercy for the hatred and jealousy and selfishness and violence which so completely encompassed the people. It was into a chaotic social disorder that the Nazarene came, disorder, however, that was ripe for his teachings and leadership, as was proved by his popularity with the masses.

The Jews of Jesus' time were an intensely religious people. They were dominated by the Law, observance of which centered in the Temple, rebuilt by Herod in a manner that led Josephus to describe it as like a mountain covered with snow. Worship here was carried on with great pomp and ceremony, especially during important feast days. From the sacrifice of thousands of animals, sheep and cattle, a red stream ran into the pool of Bethesda, transforming it into a reservoir of blood. Attendant priests and Levites made up a large body living off the revenue of the Temple. Yet its very grandeur had the effect of setting it apart from the people. Moreover, the fact that the High Priest was named by Rome and paid a salary from funds extracted from the people added to the general dissatisfaction. The people felt themselves exploited.

In every community was a synagogue, the center of religious observance and education. It was open to all the people, who controlled and directed its activities apart from the influence of the priests. The chief purpose of the synagogue was to furnish a place where the Law was taught and to serve as a meeting place on the Sabbath for study of the Bible. On other days it was a sort of Temple of Justice, where minor offenses were heard and adjudicated. Its religious services consisted of the reading and expounding of the Scriptures by rabbi or layman, and prayer before and after the reading. The priest and prophet had little if any part in these services; and, because of their character, the scribe was the accepted leader.

The effort by extraneous powers, especially the Hellenistic movement, to weaken and supersede Judaic forms and rites of worship became the source of much confusion on the part of the people, and this state led to a falling away from the strict demands of the religious leaders of the day. It is said that the multiplication of

demands and denials went to such an extent that thirty-nine forms of activity were strictly forbidden on the Sabbath, that six hundred and thirteen commands to do and prohibitions not to do led to deep discontent and confusion among the people. This very system made the scribe a necessity in the explanation and interpretation of the Law and its complex application.

The position and function of the scribe had assumed great importance. The Jewish people, scattered after their exile into many communities, had as a common bond the Law. This was the uniting force that held together a dispersed people. The Law was elaborated, interpreted, and explained in the Torah and Mishnah, the Blackstone of the Hebrew race. But as any body of law needs an interpreter, so this body of religious law, which not only included the particularities, commands, and prohibitions of religious rites and worship but defined the very essence of daily living for all the people, especially required, in fact made imperative, an exponent. It was the code of the people. Thus sprang from necessity the scribe, scholar, rabbi, lawyer, and magistrate.

As the Torah, the divine Law of Israel, became the people's textbook and code of both religious and civic activity, the scribe, its interpreter, assumed a place of great importance in the social order. But it inevitably followed from the nature of his broad and important duties that he became imbued with the letter of the Law at the expense of the spirit. This was openly manifest in the severe rebukes Jesus pronounced upon these lawyer-preacher scholars. The words of Jesus to the "scribes of the Pharisees": ² "Those who are strong have no need of a doctor, but those who are ill: I have not

² Mark 2:17 (Moffatt's *New Translation of the Bible*, Harper & Brothers, New York).

come to call just men but sinners," posit an inseparable connection between scribes and Pharisees, a relation clearly indicated by the Master on divers occasions.

The scribe was the lawyer, the interpreter of the meaning of the Law. To emphasize the position of the impartial judge, he was supposed to serve without pay. Among the scribes were many noble characters. To "sit in Moses' seat" called for development of the best in those aware of the responsibility devolving upon one who had the important duty of administering the affairs, civic and religious, of an entire people. Hillel and Shammai, contemporaries of Jesus, and Gamaliel, at whose feet Paul was privileged to sit, are examples of the eminent personages classified as scribes. There could scarcely be more illustrious examples of the high type of character developed under the system which called for interpreters of the Law.

As the inhabitants resisted the oncoming influence of Greek culture, language, art, and pagan forms of worship, there grew up definite groups determined to maintain the old traditions and forms of worship. They held strictly to the letter of the Law, which had been the guide and inspiration of the Jewish race for so many centuries. The age of prophets had passed, and spiritual leaders had developed in the priesthood and in the groups termed Pharisee and Sadducee. Of these, the Pharisees, numbering about 6,000, were the Puritans of the period. They held to the letter rather than the spirit of their religion and became the leaders of the social order. They not only held strictly to the Law but to the tradition, the corpus of decisions and verdicts of rabbis, corresponding to modern court decisions. They kept themselves separate from the Gentiles and held in contempt those who disobeyed the Law.

It seems that their strict adherence to the letter led to the severe denunciations which Jesus at times pronounced upon the Pharisees. Nevertheless, Jesus had much in common with these strict constructionists. The mental state of pharisaism grew out of a sincere protest against the materialism of the times, but it lost something of the spirit of the Jewish religion in the observance of a multitude of intimate details.

The Sadducees, unlike the Pharisees, had been friendly to the Hellenic inundation. They were the aristocrats of the time and included the majority of the priests. They held to the Mosaic Law but rejected the traditions of the Torah. They did not, unlike the Pharisees, believe in angels, spirits, and the resurrection of the body. They were less rigid in observance of the Law and were friendly with the Gentiles. When they saw advantage in it, they unhesitatingly joined hands with Rome. This was because they held political and economic conditions above religious observance. As most of the priests were of this party, the Sadducees in effect became the rulers of the Temple. As a party they disappeared with the destruction of the city and Temple in 70 A.D. Because the priests were the political leaders, as well as the rulers of the Temple, in this body church and state were united.

Another group of considerable importance, although not mentioned in the New Testament, were the Essenes. Judaism was no more united in a common front than is Christianity today. Essenes were monks, celibates, and ascetics in many directions. They dressed in white uniforms, bathed often, shunned the market place, refused to bind themselves by oaths, and were fatalists. They dwelt apart in desert places and held their property in common.

This in general was the status of society into which Jesus entered as teacher and Messiah. The masses, in

poverty and for the most part without education, were far readier to receive the leaven of truth contained in his inspired messages than were the self-satisfied and influential, who formed the upper strata of the populace.

IV

The Gospel Evidences Regarding Jesus

CHRISTIANS who accept Christ Jesus as Way-Shower and Saviour, as Lord and Redeemer, require no evidence regarding his life and teachings other than that found in the Four Gospels. To these disciples the proof is convincing and complete. No other biography is necessary, no other life story is needed. In them we have the first records of the life, teachings, and works of the Founder of Christianity. It is well, then, to examine briefly the source of these records, as to their authorship, contents, period, and relative agreement. Also it may be justifiably queried as to the sources of the books now extant which make up the Gospels, for these are the expression, the very source and foundation of Christian faith and doctrine.

The first three Gospels are termed the "Synoptics" because they treat the life of Jesus in a somewhat similar manner; that is to say, they are biographical in form. The Fourth Gospel is metaphysical rather than biographical, as it deals more specifically with the spiritual nature of the Master's teachings. While the books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke have many features in common, yet there are differences, especially in the chronological order of the events recorded, that are difficult to reconcile. Yet these differences, marked as they are, are not greater than can be accounted for by the fact that they were written at different times by individuals of somewhat diverse talents and emotions, and all at a considerable period after the events occurred. None of the

Synoptics were written by eye witnesses, unless, perhaps, it be the record of the week of the crucifixion as recorded by Mark. It is generally agreed that the Gospel attributed to Matthew is not in its present form the work of the Apostle. But it is also agreed that its foundation was the work of Matthew himself.

Because of the similarity of the three records, it is generally conceded that there was a common source, known to all, some record of the life and sayings of Jesus, probably written in Aramaic, that has disappeared. Following the resurrection and disappearance of Jesus, there arose in course of time disagreement as to the precise form of his teachings. And there began to be written down the words of the Master as recalled by various persons. It is believed that the Apostle Matthew was the first and the most reliable of these early writers. This conclusion is largely based upon a statement by Papias, an early Christian historian, who wrote between 130 and 160 A.D. He states that "Matthew composed the sayings in the Hebrew (Aramaic) language and every one interpreted them as he was able." (Eusebius.)

That Papias does not refer to the Gospel of Matthew is evident, as this Gospel contains much more than the sayings of the Master. These sayings of Jesus written by Matthew are generally termed "Q," from the German *Quelle*, meaning "source." Of their existence scholars are convinced, as the Gospels of Matthew and Luke contain material not recorded by Mark, who wrote the first Gospel to appear. Moreover, it is probable that Mark did not see this document. It is certain, however, that the Gospel of Matthew contains material derived from some source to which Mark did not have access, or which he did not care to incorporate in his biography.

It is generally held that Mark is the earliest of the Four Gospels, and, while the exact date of its appearance has

not been determined, it is believed to have been in the seventh decade of the first century, probably in 60 or 62 A.D. It is believed that John Mark was the son of a Christian Jewess living in Jerusalem, at whose home the early Christians were wont to gather. It is also held that John Mark was the young man with Jesus on the night of the arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane who escaped after leaving his cloak in the hands of one of the captors. This, however, is deduced from circumstantial rather than from direct evidence.

It is certain that Mark attended Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey to the Gentiles, and that, when disagreement arose between these Apostles at Perga, Asia Minor, he left them. It is also plainly evident from the Scriptural record that Mark became the close friend of Peter. It is commonly held that he became Peter's interpreter, accompanying him to Rome, and that it was from Peter that Mark obtained the information set forth in his Gospel.

It is evident from the style of this Gospel that it was designed as sermons, probably for Gentile readers, as Matthew's Gospel was written for Jews. It is sometimes called the Roman Gospel. It contains many words of Latin and Aramaic origin translated into the Greek. And from its rapid and vivid style it is evident that its primary source was one who heard Jesus' words and saw his works. None other could have told so vibrant and compelling a story of the Nazarene's life and works. It is forthright in its style, as the frequent use of the word "straightway" indicates. Eusebius states on the authority of Clement of Alexandria that the Gospel was submitted to Peter and received his approval. This seems likely, since Peter and Mark were in close companionship.

Mark's Gospel contains no genealogical data such as appears in Matthew and Luke. But the narrative ma-

terial for the most part appears in the other Synoptics. Mark's style, however, is quite unlike the other writers. The language of the Greek manuscript, as compared with that of Matthew and Luke, is rough, apparently reflecting the uncouth Greek spoken by the Hebrews. There are comparatively few statements found in Mark that do not appear in the other Synoptics. The stories of the healing of the deaf man and of the blind man at Bethsaida, of the disciples unable to eat their meals because of the crowd, the dispute among them, the incident of the young man with the linen cloth at the time of the arrest—these and a few minor incidents, especially occurrences during the trial before Pilate, constitute the chief statements not found in Matthew and Luke. Mark had no desire to present Jesus as the Messiah of the lineage of David and Abraham. His purpose was to present him "as the conquering Saviour, the incarnate and wonder-working Son of God, living and acting among men; to portray him in the fullness of his living energy."¹

Some scholars insist that the Gospel was originally written in Aramaic and, in support of this, point to several words carried over without translation even in the Revised Version. These are Boanerges, Talitha-cumi, Corban, Ephphatha, Abba, Rabbi, and the words uttered on the cross, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani." Other indications of its Aramaic origin are found in Aramaic proper names and grammatical forms peculiar to that language. The evidence seems to be accumulative that support of the Aramaic origin is in the ascendancy. The problem as to the original tongue, however, is not vital to the significance of the Master's message. The English versions are forthright and convincing, and that is the important issue.

What is known as the Synoptic problem is raised by

¹ *Peloubet's Bible Dictionary*, Philadelphia: John C. Winston Company, 1925, p. 386.

scholars, and many questions are asked which seem difficult to answer. One of these relates to the abrupt end in the early manuscripts of Mark's Gospel at the eighth verse of the last chapter, with the words "for they were afraid," while Matthew and Luke continue the narrative. It is contended that verses 9-20 were added later to supply what seemed necessary to complete the story. But these problems, which are due to lack of agreement upon questions raised in modern criticism, in nowise impair the value of the Gospels. They set forth the essential facts regarding the Master's life, teachings, and works, and thus meet a great need of humanity to know more of God through His perfect revelator, Christ Jesus.

It seems probable that the Gospel of Matthew bore the Apostle's name not because he was its author in the form now presented in the New Testament, but rather because it closely follows the early source Q, which is generally ascribed to Matthew. For this reason it finds the first place in the canon of the New Testament. In completeness, character, and purpose it deserves the importance accorded to it in the biographies of the Founder of Christianity. Renan regarded it of such worth that he characterized it as "the most important book of Christendom—the most important book which has ever been written."

The same question arises as to the original language of the Gospel, whether Aramaic or Greek, but it may be said, as in the case of Mark's Gospel, that its value lies not in its original language but in the quality of the writing and the message it conveys. The general conclusion as to the source of this Gospel is that the writer, Matthew, perhaps had before him the document Q, the Logia, or sayings of Jesus, of which Matthew himself was the author. In corroboration of the statement of Eusebius, quoted above, may be cited the statement of Irenaeus

that Matthew among the Hebrews published a Gospel in their own dialect when Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome and founding a church. Other early writers also refer to a writing by Matthew in his native tongue, Aramaic, all of which seems to substantiate the conclusion that there was an early writing by the Apostle, not now extant, which was the source of the Gospel bearing the name of Matthew.

The frequent references to the Old Testament, and especially the references to the coming of the Messiah in the person of Christ Jesus, make it certain that the author was a Jew, one familiar with their sacred Scriptures, and that he wrote especially for his own race. This finds proof in the extensive genealogy tracing Joseph's lineage to King David, even to Abraham. But Matthew's vision reached beyond the confines of Jewry, for he of all the Gospel writers tells of the coming of the Magi, Gentiles from the East. He also relates the healing of the centurion's servant, a Gentile, and he foresees the admission of Gentiles to the Kingdom, although some of the Jews will be rejected. The Gospel, the good news proclaimed by Christ Jesus, will be taken to the whole world, and all prepared through baptism will be received into divine glory.

The exact date of the Gospel is uncertain. It probably appeared shortly after Mark's Gospel at a time when dark clouds hung heavily over Israel. Jerusalem was in danger of being beset by Rome, if it had not already fallen. The second coming of the Christ as anticipated had not eventuated. Israel had fallen from her high estate and was no longer the "sphere of the divine Kingdom." There was turbulence throughout Palestine. The teachings of Jesus had not taken definite form, for Mark's Gospel had not received general distribution. Matthew issues a call for steadfastness in the face of

threatening disaster: to trust God whose reign is both universal and eternal. In His worship alone and in obedience to His commands are to be found the peace, freedom, and salvation which are forever the goal of mankind.

The value of Matthew's Gospel is to no small degree in its Jewish outlook. It presents the Gospel message from the viewpoint of one familiar with the Jewish form of religion and worship. He joins his inheritance, the old Israel, with the new Gospel, the new Church of Christ. While Mark and Luke aimed their Gospels toward the Gentiles, to convert to Christ's way those outside the old order, Matthew was pleading for the remnant of Israel. But his was a broad vision, for it embraced the spread of Christianity even to the uttermost parts of the earth.

In fulfilling his purpose, Matthew drew striking pictures of the background of the Master's life and teachings which are necessary to a clear understanding of his mission and ministry. In many ways, especially from the standpoint of biography, Matthew's Gospel presents a more satisfactory account of Jesus' life than do the other Synoptics. His language is both charming and intimate. Accounts of healings of sin and disease, of many wondrous works, the story of the transfiguration, the account of the resurrection, are all found in the pages of this priceless record of the one sent of God to free mankind from bondage, self-imposed and age-long. It is little wonder that this Gospel has become so greatly loved by those who accept Christ Jesus as Saviour and Way-Shower, for it sets forth the very means whereby may be established that peace on earth and good will toward men for which the peoples long.

Luke's Gospel is the longest and contains much material not elsewhere recorded. There are eleven parables and a half dozen miracles that appear only in the Third

Gospel. Its declared aim is to inform Theophilus, apparently a Greek, of many things regarding Jesus and his works, laying special emphasis upon the miracles performed. It probably appeared about twenty years later than the first Gospel.

Luke, a physician, met Paul, was by him converted to Christianity, and accompanied the great Apostle on his second missionary journey to Asia Minor and later to Rome. It appears that during these travels, Luke lost no opportunity to learn of the teachings and doings of Jesus, and in this way discovered much material found neither in *Q* nor in the preceding Gospels. While it is apparent that he followed Mark and *Q* to some degree, yet he omitted the text of Mark's Gospel from chapter 6, verse 46, to chapter 8, verse 26, but added material not found elsewhere.

Since Luke uses material not found in the earlier narratives, certain scholars have named the source of these incidents *L*. This material includes a different genealogy than Matthew's, the annunciation by the angel to Mary as to the wondrous experience that was to be hers, a clear account of John Baptist's work and its meaning, the temptations in the wilderness, the draught of fishes, the healing of the leper, the raising of the son of the widow of Nain, the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, the Master's account of the incident with Zaccheus, and the Last Supper.

The Greek of Luke's Gospel is regarded as the most nearly perfect of all the evangelical writers; and the preface to his Gospel has been called the most finished piece of writing in the New Testament. As a result of much research on the part of Luke, his Gospel is the most complete biography of the Master. But Luke was more than a biographer, more than a historian. As Jesus' true mission as Messiah unfolded to him, he be-

came in large measure a true disciple of the great Galilean.

Innumerable stories, often completely traditional, had sprung up regarding the Founder of Christianity. These Luke undertook to untangle, and the success of his efforts is plainly manifest in the Gospel itself. The author's great and painstaking care, especially in determining the sequence of events in the life of Jesus, make it probably the most accurate in this respect of all the Gospels. Renan says of Luke's work that it was the most beautiful book ever written. Of the style he writes, "The narrative flows with an ease and grace unmatched by any other historical writing." Renan, although unwilling to accept much that is written about the so-called miraculous works of the Master, yet declares that the life of Jesus was "at once the most important, the most interesting, and the most fascinating of all topics of historical and literary study."² Scarcely less could be said by any writer who feels that Jesus gave to humanity the truth about God, His Christ, and man, the truth about the universe—surely the most important message that ever has been or ever can be revealed to mankind.

Some commentators claim that Luke's Gospel cannot be Pauline in the same sense that Mark's was Petrine. Luke's teacher, Paul, was a convert, not a direct disciple of the Master, while Mark was, as it were, the amanuensis for Peter, the Apostle. Luke could not gather from his companionship with Paul the testimony of one who had heard the words spoken by the Master and witnessed his works; Luke's conclusions were those of an ardent convert who told what he had heard from Paul, but of the accuracy of Paul's testimony he was fully convinced. Sir William Ramsay points out that Luke varies the

² *Peloubet's Bible Dictionary*, Philadelphia: John C. Winston Company, 1925, p. 372.

account of the healing of the paralytic let down through a broken mud roof by substituting the word "tile" to make the story easily understood by western readers. This shows Luke's meticulous care that his account of the Master's life should be widely accepted.

Luke is the only evangelist to connect his stories with secular events, and this connection has caused much discussion as to his accuracy. The account of "taxing" in the story of the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem is by some declared lacking in historical proof, on the ground that Augustus had not ordered a general enrollment for purposes of taxation at that time. Many scholars, however, accept the wording of the story as proof of its accuracy. It appears that Luke's statement has corroborations from recently discovered papyri in Egypt.³ These state that enrollments of householders each fourteen years did actually take place. That Luke was a scholarly and accurate recorder of events relating to the birth of the world's greatest character may be accepted without hesitation.

The Gospel of John brings to Biblical scholars a somewhat acute question as to its authorship. Many modern scholars of high rank are convinced that the author was some other personage than the John who has become known as the "beloved disciple." On the other hand, many others hold to the conviction gained from material evidences that John, devoted disciple of the Master, was the author, either in his own handwriting or through the services of an amanuensis. This account is based upon full acceptance of the latter statement. This author is convinced that the Fourth Gospel was written by John at a very advanced age, probably at Ephesus, near the end of the first century of the Christian era.

³ See *Hastings' Bible Dictionary*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930, p. 559.

Little is known of John apart from the Gospel references. He was a son of Zebedee, a Galilean fisherman, apparently of comfortable circumstances, for he was the owner of a fishing boat and employed labor in the fishing industry. John's mother, Salome, is mentioned in Mark as having ministered to Jesus, and their home was probably at Bethsaida on the northern shore of Galilee, near the mouth of the Jordan, where it enters from Lake Huleh. It is generally believed that after the Roman conquest of Palestine, John was exiled to Patmos, an island off the coast of Asia Minor, but later was permitted to reside in Ephesus. His life spanned nearly the first century.

Many traditions have sprung up regarding this appealing personality. One states that he was thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil but escaped unharmed. Browning, in his *Death in the Desert*, places him, when a very aged man, in a cave in the desert, where he was aroused from a deep trance to recount the stirring incidents of his youth while in the company of the Master. Jerome represents the aged John, too feeble to walk, as being brought into the church repeating again and again, "Little children, love one another." Jesus' reply to Peter's query, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?"⁴ is cited as a prophecy that John would be translated.

It seems certain that the author of the Fourth Gospel had before him the Synoptics and the writings of Paul, whose influence in spreading Christianity had become ever stronger. It seems that John also must have imbibed something of the Greek philosophies, which undoubtedly exercised a great influence over the early Church. Proof of this is found in the use of the word *logos* in the open-

⁴ John 21:22.

ing sentences of the Gospel. This logos philosophy was a subject of intense interest both in Alexandria and in Ephesus toward the end of the first century.

The Fourth Gospel differs widely in its contents from the Synoptics. It has been stated that more than ninety per cent of its material does not appear in the other Gospels. The turning of the water into wine at Cana and the raising of Lazarus are not elsewhere recorded. There is no mention of the birth of Jesus, of his baptism, of the temptations in the wilderness, of the Pharisee and the publican; and it has but a single reference to the Kingdom of God.

In view of these important omissions, it is queried, Can this be accepted as an accurate and comprehensive record of the life of the Master? And the answer is, No! For the author had another purpose than to write a biography of Jesus. The authors of the Synoptics had done that. His manifest purpose was to analyze and interpret the life of the Nazarene from the standpoint of his Messiahship, its origin and meaning.

The chronology of the Fourth Gospel is at odds with the others. The author conceives of no development in the mentality of Jesus, no growth in thought toward his role as Messiah. He is conscious of his mission from the very beginning of his ministry. The certainty of eternal life takes the place of the Gospel of the Kingdom, so prominent with the earlier writers.

Many commentators and students believe that John saw more deeply into the life purpose of Jesus than did any other; that the spiritual import of the Master's words and the significance of his works were better understood by John. Especially did John record Jesus' assertion of unity with the Father. Emphatically did he proclaim God's Fatherhood of all. The Fourth Gospel in nowise contradicts the statements of the Synoptics.

Rather does it supplement them, with a unique spiritual insight. It extends the period of Jesus' ministry over three years, a considerably longer time than the others. The title of "theologian" has been sometimes given to John. This conveys the idea that John was accustomed to examine all questions from a spiritual standpoint.

While the Fourth Gospel presents a human side of Jesus that is most appealing, his weariness at the well of Sychar, his affection for his friends in Bethany, his thirst upon the Cross, his tender solicitude for his mother—yet the author never forgets that he is recording the life of the Messiah, the Light of the World, the true Shepherd, the Resurrection and the Life; of him who was saluted by Mary as "Rabboni," by Thomas as "my Lord" and "my God." He is the Son of God, the Word made flesh, the creator and maintainer of all reality, of all creation.

John's Gospel is the portrait of a unique personage, so spiritual, so understanding of humanity's needs, so cognizant of the Father's presence and ability to meet the human need, that untold millions have come to regard this man of Nazareth as Lord and Saviour. In the development of this devotion to and worship of Jesus, no one has played a larger part than this author of the Fourth Gospel.

V

Birth of Jesus and His Youth and Young Manhood

IT HAS been very generally accepted that the birth of Jesus dated the Christian era; that is, that he was born at the beginning of or just before the year one, and in consequence time from that event has been established as *anno Domini*, in the year of the Lord. Modern scholarship has quite disproved this belief.

In the early centuries of the Christian era there was no final rule for marking the course of time, that is, for dating events. In 527 A.D., as the years are now reckoned from the beginning of the Christian era, a learned monk, Dionysius by name, fixed the beginning of the Christian era at what was commonly accepted as the date of the birth of Jesus. The conclusion thus determined was gradually adopted in various countries and finally became established in international law. This was more than five centuries after the event in question, during which different bases for reckoning time had been in vogue. Some countries dated time from the beginning of the world, others from the Latin Julian period or from the Greek Olympiad, and still others from the foundation of the city, that is, Rome, A.U.C. (*anno ubis conditae*).

Apparently, Dionysius, accepting for his authority a Greek historian, Hippolytus, made the mistake of taking the year from the founding of Rome as 753 and the exact date of Jesus' birth as December 25 of that year. Scholars now are generally agreed that Jesus was born

either in the year 748 or 749, after the founding of Rome, thus making it five or six years earlier than did the learned monk. Herod the Great died in 4 B.C., a date pretty definitely settled. It must have been one or two years earlier when he sent out his cruel command to kill all children in the vicinity of Bethlehem "two years old and under."¹ So conclusive is the proof of this that scholars are generally agreed that Jesus was born either five or six years before the year one of the Christian era.

It may not be possible to determine conclusively in which year occurred this signal event, but it is approximately determined. It is generally known also that the fixing of the month and day of Jesus' birth is purely speculative. December 25, an old festal day, was adopted by Dionysius, and has become accepted throughout Christendom as the birthday of Christ Jesus.

No authority exists regarding the place of the birth of Jesus except the Gospel narrative. And therein it is stated that it was in Bethlehem of Judea. This appears to be in fulfillment of prophecy. Micah 5:2 definitely forecasts the event: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephphatah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, for everlasting." Many other prophecies in the Old Testament foretell the coming of a Messiah or Saviour, but none other so clearly locates the place where the holy one should appear. Matthew and Luke have similar accounts of the birth of Jesus: that he was of the line of David, that he was miraculously conceived, that he was born in Bethlehem and reared in Nazareth.

What of the method of his birth? The Gospel narrative is clear that Mary, a virgin, immaculately conceived

¹ Matthew 2:16.

and bore the Christ child without human fatherhood. In other words, so spiritually illumined was Mary's thought, so clear was her concept of God as the only Father, that she rose above the human law of generation. Thus did she give birth to one who was literally both the Son of God and the son of man, since Mary was of the order *homo*, humans.

While divinely conceived, yet Jesus partook in some measure of the fleshly nature of his earthly mother, the Virgin Mary. Thus the "Word was made flesh."² That is, the Christ idea, the divine emanation, found expression in a human babe, who, because of his spiritual origin, progressively unfolded his divine nature until he became the Way-Shower and Saviour to mankind.

Many appealing incidents are associated with the coming of this most blessed of babes. An important one relates to the birth of John, who became known as "the Baptist." Luke introduces the story of his parentage and birth after this manner: There was during the reign of Herod the Great an aged priest, Zacharias, whose wife was named Elizabeth. Both were devout adherents to the Jewish law and worship, but they were childless. One day, while performing his duty as priest in the Temple, the burning of incense while the people stood outside, an angel of the Lord came to him with a message to this effect: Be not afraid, for your prayer is heard and your wife shall bear you a son, and his name shall be John; you will be joyous and many shall rejoice at his birth. Among the reasons for this rejoicing were that this son should not drink intoxicants, but should be filled with the Holy Spirit from the moment of his birth, and that he would convert many to true worship. And, furthermore, he was to perform the holy service of pre-

² John 1:14.

paring the way for the coming of the Lord, the long-expected Messiah.

In surprise, Zacharias inquired how this could be, since both he and his wife were aged people "well stricken in years."³ Then the angel disclosed that he was Gabriel, who stands "in the presence of God."⁴ And he declared that the priest should be dumb until the foretold events should come about. Elizabeth did conceive and kept herself apart. Thereupon a contributory event enters, of great significance to the world through all succeeding generations.

Six months after Elizabeth's conception, the angel Gabriel, sent of God, appeared to a virgin espoused to a man in the city of Galilee, called Nazareth. The virgin's name was Mary, and the man's name was Joseph, of the lineage of David. The angel hailed the young woman with the startling announcement that she was greatly blessed among women because she had found favor with God and that she was to become the mother of a son, whose name would be called Jesus. And that this son would be called the "Son of the Highest";⁵ and he was to occupy the throne of David; that he would establish a rule over Jacob; and that his reign would have no end. And Mary, astonished, inquired, How could these things be? The angel assured her that the Holy Ghost, "the power of the Highest,"⁶ would overshadow her, and she would give birth to one who would be called the "Son of God." Furthermore, the angel enlightened her regarding Elizabeth and the prospective birth of a son. Mary was so deeply impressed by the angel's presence that she declared her submission to the divine Will.

³ Luke 1:18.

⁴ Luke 1:19.

⁵ Luke 1:32.

⁶ Luke 1:35.

Immediately, it seems, Mary took up the journey to the hill country of Judea to visit Elizabeth who was her cousin; here occurred experiences that confirmed her in the conviction that she was to become the "mother of my Lord,"⁷ as her host phrased it. To Elizabeth's salutation, Mary responded in that beautiful song, beginning with, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."⁸ Words could scarcely convey a deeper sense of her conviction of the divine fatherhood of the son she was about to bear. Mary remained three months with her cousin and then returned to her home in Nazareth.

Elizabeth's child was named John, and, when he had been confirmed in the Temple, Zacharias gained his voice again and prophesied that this child would become "the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways. . . . To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."⁹ Thus was born the prophet John, whose life in due time touched so definitely and withal so understandingly the life of Jesus.

Luke follows with the account of Jesus' birth in a charming strain which all Christians love. Joseph and Mary go up to Bethlehem to be taxed, in obedience to the decree from Rome, because Joseph was a descendant of David. As the inn was filled, quarters were found in a khan or stable, where the child was born and laid in a manger.

Unusual happenings marked the signal event. To the shepherds in the field as they watched their flocks, came an angel of the Lord, who bade them not to fear, for there had been born that day "a Saviour, which is Christ

⁷ Luke 1:43.

⁸ Luke 1:46-7.

⁹ Luke 1:76, 79.

the Lord.”¹⁰ Then came the heavenly host singing praises unto God for the coming of peace and good will. The shepherds, greatly impressed by these heavenly experiences, on going to the stable found Mary and the babe, and told the wonderful news to the people.

Matthew relates the coming of three wise men from the East, who, having inquired of Herod as to the birth-place of the to be Saviour, proceeded to Bethlehem and there paid their homage to him who was to become so great. Their purpose fulfilled, they disappeared into the mysterious East, whence they came.

Into the Temple, where Joseph and Mary had gone to obey the law regarding the babe, came Simeon, who, conscious that here was he who was to become the Christ, the Saviour and Lord, took the child in his arms and praised God that he had been so privileged. “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.”¹¹

Matthew records an incident of which the other gospels make no mention. Having heard of the diabolical command of Herod to slay all children two years of age and under, Joseph and Mary fled into Egypt and remained there until news came in 4 B.C. of Herod's death. The fugitives then returned to Palestine, but, hearing that Archelaus, son of Herod, reigned in Judea, they went north and settled in Nazareth, to rear the young child.

Thus came into the realm of human experience the Christ child, who was destined to wield a scepter, spiritual to be sure, but in potency without parallel in the world's

¹⁰ Luke 2:11.

¹¹ Luke 2:29 ff.

history. That his coming was foretold, there can be no doubt. Of the manner of his appearance there need be no controversy. Was he sent of God? To be sure. For that divine Law which Christ Jesus knew and demonstrated so successfully operated in the Hebrew consciousness until it brought out a mentality so spiritualized, so free from material constrictions, that Mary saw true fatherhood in God, and, seeing it, was enabled to give birth to the infant Jesus. It was nothing supernatural, but divinely natural. And the method of his birth gave Jesus the command over matter in a degree which enabled him to do his many mighty works.

Over the years of Jesus' youth in Nazareth the curtain of silence has been drawn. In spite of persistent efforts which have been made through the centuries to penetrate the darkness, no reliable information has been found. There are, however, certain conditions and circumstances surrounding the youth and young manhood of Jesus of which we may be reasonably sure.

Mary, convinced of the character and mission of her child, would naturally take upon herself to prepare him for his great ministry. It is reasonably certain that he attended the school kept by the rabbis of Nazareth, receiving full instruction in the Scriptures; that is, in the Old Testament. This is borne out by the intimate knowledge of the Scriptures displayed by the Master during the years of his ministry. It also seems likely that he knew Greek, and Hebrew, the language of the Scriptures; and that he spoke Aramaic, the common tongue of the day, is evidenced by several expressions in that tongue which, untranslated, stand in the King James Version of this day.

It is significant that between the settling of his parents in Nazareth and his appearance at the ford of Jordan to be baptized by John, there is but a single incident of

Jesus' experience in the Gospel story. It is as fascinating as it is brief. With his parents the lad, then twelve years of age, went up to the Temple in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. On the return journey the parents missed him, but thought he was with the company. After a day they sought him and, not finding him among his kinsfolk, returned to the city, and to their astonishment found him in the Temple in the midst of the doctors, learned men, "both hearing them, and asking them questions."¹² His understanding puzzled them. Apparently resentful that he should have absented himself, his mother queried him, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." The lad's answer conveys a depth of meaning not, perhaps, at first discerned by his parents. "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

Here, manifestly, is implied the thought that his parents should have already discovered that he was chosen of God for some holy purpose of which he was, in a degree at least, conscious. What his "Father's business" was did not appear in the full depth of its significance until the end of his momentous career. His parents, although aware of the holy experience of his birth, apparently were as yet quite in darkness as to the tremendous significance of the years ahead. Mary, however, conscious of her own experience, knew that God was unfolding His purpose with the youth. Therefore she "kept all these sayings and pondered them in her heart."¹³

There are certain conclusions regarding the youth of Jesus which may be justifiably drawn. Nazareth, set in a basin of the hills just north of the plain of Esdraelon, was by no means an isolated community. Through it

¹² Luke 2:46 ff.

¹³ Luke 2:19.

ran the main road between Judea, Galilee, and Damascus, a chief artery of commerce and travel. Just over the hill to the northwest on the edge of the plain lay a considerable city, Sepphoris, which, from recent explorations, appears to have been a city of importance, with the commerce and culture of that period.

Not far from Nazareth, across the plain between the sea and the Jordan, ran a great highway, over which flowed the tide of travel between East and West, between Egypt and the desert countries, between the Great Empire of Europe and the country to the east of Jordan, even distant India. Along its dusty miles the camel trains of commerce wound their laborious way. Over its level course marched the Roman legions bent on conquest, or to service as policemen over the Decapolis and the farther confines of the Empire.

Can one believe that an active youth, keen-eyed and sharp of wit, would not have mingled with this stream of world activity, that he was not familiar with the life of that day as enacted in a city of the size and character of Sepphoris? It is highly reasonable that he time and again accompanied his kinsmen on their visits to Jerusalem to worship in the manner prescribed by the Jewish Law. That he was familiar with the nature about him is evidenced from the sayings and parables which so frequently appear in his discourses. The flowers, the birds, animal husbandry, the vineyard, the sower and reaper—all find place in the conversations of this many-sided man. It is reasonable to believe he was trained in carpentry, the craft of Joseph. We may well believe from the character revealed in the years of his ministry that he did well whatever he undertook. He was a good builder before he became the Saviour of humanity. Inspired by consciousness of the divine Presence, he was efficient in all his activities.

Of the physical appearance of Jesus there is no accurate information. Despite all the yearning, all the consecrated endeavor, to learn of his physical appearance, nothing authentic is known. Whatever records there may have been of his sayings, there is nothing extant beyond the Gospel records. It seems probable that when the Turks burned the great library at Alexandria in the seventh century, there were destroyed many valuable documents pertaining to him who has become the central figure of Christendom. Be that as it may, there is preserved to this generation no written word from him, no portrait or other representation of him that goes beyond the imagination of the artist. Conjecture is the determining factor in all portraits, all statues, all representations of the world's noblest figure.

And yet certain conclusions may be drawn regarding Jesus, if we read, as it were, between the lines of the Gospel story. He was trained as a carpenter in Joseph's shop. This was in itself a trade that called for the development of strength and control of physical power. There are indications that he was possessed of strength and endurance, else he could scarcely have made the long and trying journeys about Galilee and Judea. The roads were rough, the distances traversed were long, and many of the roads, as that from Jericho to Jerusalem, were up miles of ascent, not steep but steadily upward.

Furthermore, could many of the acts of the Master, many of the mental positions taken by him have been characteristic of a weak man? Hardly! On two occasions he drove the traders from the Temple with a whip of cords, overturning the tables of the money-changers, in his zeal to free the Temple from the desecration of commercialism. This was scarcely the act of a weak man. Again, when he fasted in the wilderness, he could not have been deficient in physical endurance. No more

was he a weakling when he denounced his tormentors, scribes and Pharisees, throwing into their very teeth the hypocrisy and deceit which he saw them manifesting. And again, on that fateful night when brought before Pilate, symbol of the appalling power of Rome, he faced his judge with the calm and serenity which belong to a man in full possession of a sure sense of strength and courage, qualities which bespeak a mentality assured, as well as physical capability.

In view of these and other similar incidents which may be cited, it seems an anomaly to represent this master man as an emaciated weakling, as has so often been done by artists through the centuries. No more does it seem logical to depict him as extremely robust, heavy with adiposity, as was the custom of at least one celebrated artist. His active life, his uncertain food supply, the heat of that semitropical clime were far from conducive to the development of a grossly fleshy physique.

May we not conclude that he was a man of sound body springing from a sound mind, the sanest and soundest ever represented in a physical symbol; that he was healthy, able to endure great activity, even hardship, possessing the health and strength which were the manifestation of his recognition of the Source of all health and of all strength, the infinite Mind, with which he was in such constant and assured rapport?

That there must have been something in the Master's very bearing that impressed those about him is evident from John's account of what happened in the Garden on that fateful night of Jesus' arrest. In reply to his query, "Whom seek ye?" the officers replied, "Jesus of Nazareth." He replied, "I am he."¹⁴ Apparently awed by his fearless mien, "they went backward, and fell to the

¹⁴ John 18:4 ff.

ground.”¹⁵ Surely this courageous facing of his enemies was not the act of a weak and shrinking personality. Jesus well knew the terrible experience ahead, yet so strengthened was he through his long period of communion with the Father that he was fully prepared to meet the cruel experience which awaited him.

¹⁵ John 18:6.

VI

Jesus and John

FROM the time Jesus was twelve until he appeared at the ford of Jordan to be baptized of John, nothing whatsoever is known of his career. A veil is completely drawn over that period, probably twenty-one years, since it is pretty definitely accepted that Jesus began his ministry at the age of thirty-three, that is, 27 or 28 A.D. It was manifestly not the purpose of the writers of the four biographies to delineate the incidents of his boyhood and youth, but rather to concentrate upon his ministry; not upon what he was as the child of Mary, but rather upon what he came to be because of his recognition and demonstration of his divine nature.

It is not at all unlikely that more intimate knowledge of his early years, a more definite picture of his youth and young manhood might easily draw attention away from his mission, to center it upon his human experience during those long years of preparation for the incomparable service he was to render humanity. So important was this service that to obscure it even in the slightest degree by details of his young life would be a calamity of great magnitude. The Gospels were not written to satisfy biographical curiosity, but rather to state the teachings of the Master to mortals, teachings which point the way to salvation and eternal life, which acquaint mankind with God, the Father, and make known the brotherhood of man.

At the beginning of the first century, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and in fact of all Judea, were restless under

the rule of Rome. Archelaus, who had succeeded his father, Herod the Great, as ruler of Judea, became so objectionable because of his cruelty and barbaric ways that appeal was made to Rome for his removal. This finally succeeded, and, at the earnest petition of the people, Judea was made a Roman province, with a procurator, a Roman representative, at the head. While outwardly there was calm, inwardly there was restlessness owing to resistance to domination from an outside, foreign authority. Especially did the paying of taxes to Rome stir resentment sometimes to the point of rebellion, even though oftentimes, it seems, the taxes were quite just; but the tax gatherers, because of their dishonesty, were looked upon with distrust, and even with enmity. They were ostracized and often were regarded as outcasts.

The age of prophecy had passed. No inspired revelation of God's Will had appeared for several centuries. But the people still looked for the coming of the Messiah, a King who should restore the ancient glory of Israel and even lead on to greater heights of influence and prosperity. This was the situation when there appeared a prophet who emphatically proclaimed that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. This was John, son of Elizabeth, and cousin of Jesus. At a ford of Jordan, probably not now easily located with exactness, John began to baptize. Many were stirred by the fiery words of this wilderness prophet, whose coat was of camel's hair and whose food was locusts and wild honey. Surely, here was a man of the people.

The Pharisees and Sadducees, who were attracted by reports of the results of John's preaching, he denounced in vigorous terms. He also assumed the role of a forerunner, the herald of one vastly greater, the latchets of whose shoes he was not even worthy to unloose. Then came Jesus himself to be baptized; and although John at first objected to baptizing him, Jesus persuaded him, with

the mild protest, "suffer it to be so now." ¹ John saw a dove descending upon the newly baptized Jesus, as he came from the water, and a voice from heaven was heard to say, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." ²

It appears that the growing conviction in Jesus' thought that under God's Will he was destined to perform some high office for humanity, was confirmed by this experience. He was the Son of God, divinely appointed to lead humanity out of its self-imposed bondage. From that moment his ministry unfolded in increasing importance. He was to demonstrate his position as Lord and Master, as Way-Shower and Saviour to all prepared to recognize and receive his Christly message.

John at no time mistook his own position. He was the advance agent, the herald of the Messiah. When queried, "Who are you?" by priests and Levites, despatched from Jerusalem to inquire as to the character of this wilderness preacher to whom the people were flocking in great numbers, he replied directly, "I am not the Christ." ³ Persisting, they urged, "What, then? Art thou Elias?" He replied, "I am not." Further interrogated as to whether he was the Prophet, he again replied in the negative. Asked why, then, as he was neither the Christ nor Elias nor the Prophet, he was baptizing the people, he replied in terms again foretelling the coming of one greater than he. "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." ⁴ And he followed with an allegorical prophecy drawn from the common vocation of hus-

¹ Matthew 3:15.

² Matthew 3:17.

³ John 1:19 ff.

⁴ Luke 3:16.

bandry as to the form and efficacy of the Master's work.

When on the following day John saw Jesus approaching, he cried out, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me."⁵ And John related his experience when, having baptized Jesus, he saw the Spirit like a dove descending from heaven upon him. And again he declared Jesus to be the Son of God.

Again next day, while talking with two of his disciples, seeing Jesus approaching, he declared, "Behold the Lamb of God." Two young men, attracted by John's words, followed Jesus. Observing this, Jesus turned and asked what they wanted. They replied by asking where he lived. Thereupon Jesus bade them come and see; and they remained with him the rest of the day. One of these was Andrew, who at once sought out his brother Simon, telling him that he had found the Messiah. Thereupon Simon went to Jesus, who, beholding Simon, said, "Thou art Simon, the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas," that is, in Aramaic, "a stone."⁶ Thus, early in his discipleship, Simon was recognized for the part he was to play in the founding of Christianity. Jesus, knowing his impulsive nature, was giving Simon an incentive to steadfastness.

The essence of John's preaching was contained in the words "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,"⁷ and this man of the wilderness drove home his fiery message with telling effect. No soft-palmed messenger was this, but a proclaimer of mortals' great need to repent, to change from hypocrisy and evil ways to the spiritual mode of thought and action. And he faced

⁵ John 1:29 ff.

⁶ John 1:42.

⁷ Matthew 3:2.

the world's unbelievers and critics as well as converts and disciples.

John's words of condemnation reached the ears of Herod Antipas, and in retaliation he put John in prison. Josephus states that Herod's reason for making the arrest was that the multitude followed John and was so deeply impressed that he feared an uprising, a rebellion that would endanger his own authority. Accordingly, John was arrested and sent to Machaerus, a gloomy castle east of the Dead Sea. But Herod did not thereby stop the thoughts and deeds of this irrepressible forerunner of the Christ-messenger.

Jesus, upon hearing of John's fate, had departed into Galilee, where he began his active ministry. Hearing of the marvelous results and apparently not yet fully convinced of the role the Master was to play in establishing the Kingdom, John sent messengers to inquire if Jesus was really the promised one who was to become Liberator of Israel. It occasions something of wonderment that John, who had already proclaimed Jesus, whose forerunner he was, as the Son of God, should entertain a lingering doubt as to the status of the Master. Perhaps the impending danger to himself and long days of contemplation had developed a mental state which required some reassurance.

In his reply, Jesus showed great wisdom. Something more than words was necessary. A mere statement that he was the Messiah was not enough. Works of an unusual nature alone could convince John. And, moreover, it seems that Jesus was not ready to proclaim his Messiahship. Be that as it may, his reply to John's query could leave no doubt in the mind of the redoubtable John. "Go and report to John what you see and hear; the blind regain their sight and the lame walk, and lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised

up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them. And blessed is he who shall find no cause of stumbling in me.”⁸ Surely, all lingering doubt which John might have entertained was cast out by this convincing proof that the Christ had come and was operative in restoring the sick, even those who had passed the portals of death.

The views held by Jesus regarding John are clearly set forth in the following account by both Matthew and Luke. Having sent away John’s messengers, Jesus turned to the assembled crowd and asked of them what kind of man they expected to find when they went into the wilderness to interview John. A feeble reed shaken by the wind? A man in soft raiment? A prophet? Yes, they found much more than a prophet, a messenger sent of God, whose promise was to prepare them for the coming Messiah, the Christ who would relieve humanity of its burdens. “Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”⁹

These incisive queries clearly indicate the vigor and forthrightness of Jesus’ language. And while he fully recognized the splendid qualities manifested by John, yet he saw in him certain mental states which blocked his entrance to the Kingdom of God. He who had gained a larger understanding of God, of His Christ and of man, however humble a disciple humanly, had gained more of the Kingdom than had the fiery Baptist. To the gross materialist of the day, John seemed an insane impostor. To Jesus, he was the herald of the Kingdom, spiritual and immanent, whenever consciousness was open to the reception of Christ, Truth.

The events surrounding the beheading of John as given

⁸ Luke 7:19 ff.

⁹ Matthew 11:11.

in the Gospels present some difficulties. Some scholars believe that Herodias was not the wife of Antipas but of another Herod, Boethus. It seems that Salome, who is presented as dancing before Herod Antipas for his entertainment and that of his guests, was not a young girl but must have been a woman of mature years. Also, it was quite unprecedented for a member of a Jewish or Roman family of rank and power to furnish such entertainment at a public feast. It seems an anomaly for a tetrarch of Rome, as was Herod, to have promised the woman whatever she requested, even half of his kingdom.

The record of Mark, more complete than that of Matthew, leaves no doubt, however, as to the untimely taking off of this militant and fearless proclaimer of the need for repentance. He saw through the hypocrisy of the times in the upper classes, especially among the Pharisees and scribes, and, seeing it, he hesitated not to denounce it in the strongest language.

It appears that many followers came to John, attracted by his uncompromising assault upon the ease of the times. He was in a sense a later Amos, for, like the old shepherd of Tekoa, he saw the evil to which the people were in bondage, and, seeing it, he minced no words in denouncing it. It appears that several of his followers later became the disciples of Jesus. Professor Kent puts the situation in beautiful language, "Finally, through contact with him, Jesus gained a clearer consciousness of his own divine task; and where John the Baptist laid down his work, the Master Builder of Nazareth took it up."¹⁰

¹⁰ Charles F. Kent, *Life and Teachings of Jesus*, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913, p. 75.

VII

In the Wilderness

THE story of the forty days spent by Jesus in the wilderness, when he met and overcame the temptations which Satan ¹ presented to him, contains many problems worthy of careful consideration. It appears from the Gospel narratives that after his experience at the river Jordan, where he had been baptized by John, Jesus, "led up of the spirit," ² went directly into the wilderness. Now the wilderness in Palestine was not a forest, as that word commonly implies, but a desolate region nearly devoid of vegetation, a desert place, the home of wild beasts, of jackals and hyenas. The time had come for him to meet and master his human nature, the inheritance derived from the fact of material birth, with the usual conditions attendant upon that experience. Although spiritually conceived, Jesus was born of a woman, and accordingly partook in some measure of conditions which attach to human generation and birth.

Consciousness of his mission was unfolding step by step. The experiences at Jordan had stirred him deeply, and it was becoming increasingly evident to him that he had a holy mission to perform, that he was to be the Saviour of the world, and in consequence he must face and overcome the temptations common to humanity. In this conviction Jesus was confirmed by the voice which came to him as he left the water after his baptism by John. The effect that this had upon Jesus is well indicated by what followed.

¹ Satan in the form of personal sense, or evil, or "the father of lies."

² Matthew 4:1.

The wilderness experience is variously set forth in the Gospel record. In Mark, the earliest of the Gospels, it is covered in a single verse, while in Matthew the experience is related in detail. It was after a long period of fasting, of abstinence from all material food, a period of spiritual communion, that the tempter came in the guise of personal sense. It came in the form that would most quickly appeal to one after a long fast. This tempter first presented itself to Jesus as the natural mental suggestion that, since he had not eaten, he was hungry, and that he should utilize his spiritual power to turn the stones into bread to meet his need.

How perfect, how complete the answer! "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."³ The Master knew that life springs not from a material source and is not supported by matter; that the bread of life is spiritual understanding, the word of God; that truth alone sustains, since material food has no relation to man's true life, forever maintained by its divine source. The whole experience was a mental one.

It seems logical, moreover, that there may have been another consideration which influenced his position. Poverty of the masses was the order of the times. The thickly settled country with limited fertility left many underfed. The tempter would, through exciting his humane proclivities, strive to encourage him to use his God-given powers to meet the common material need. Be that as it may, he was not trapped by the net craftily set for him. He knew that the primary need of mankind was for spiritual truth, the very bread of life.

Again comes the tempter, the emissary of the carnal mind, and its offering takes a new form. From a pinnacle of the Temple itself, the summit and symbol of the

³ Matthew 4:4.

Jewish worship, it sought to exercise its craftiness. Again it prefaced its proposal by a cynical condition: "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down,"⁴ for the promise is that God's angels shall care for His own. Here again the effort obviously was to turn Jesus away from his holy mission, his service as Messiah, in the hope that in the experience he would be destroyed. The kingdom of Satan then would no longer be in danger of destruction from this Son of God.

The subtle proposition which the tempter placed before Jesus at the most exalted center of Jewish worship and on the very pinnacle of its holiest Temple, was to make him disavow and disclaim his allegiance to the forms, customs, creeds, and laws of its ancient religion. He was to break with all the traditional forms of worship developed through the centuries by the chosen people. These the tempter had been able to withstand and in a measure corrupt. But here was a new factor, one who was being hailed as the Son of God, the long-expected Messiah. He must be removed, at all cost, for he was a menace to the work of the adversary, to Satan's earthly domain. He was to cast himself from his exalted mental state.

Jesus was by no means prepared to break with the ancient worship. He was far too wise to be caught by such temptation. Was he not to preach in the various temples and in the synagogues of Galilee and Judea? Fully aware of the intent of the tempter, he boldly declared, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."⁵ He would embark upon no such foolhardy enterprise as denying in toto the Jewish tradition, and expect God to protect him from evil consequences. He was not to destroy but to improve men's concept of God; to estab-

⁴ Matthew 4:5.

⁵ Matthew 4:7.

lish the true worship but not through such means as the tempter proposed to him.

Jesus knew full well the workings of the carnal mind. He knew it to be enmity against God. He was fully aware of its unholy character, of its intents and purposes, and he was not enticed by earthly rewards. Firmly he stood by his enlightened position.

But the evil one was not satisfied. Not all the temptations had been presented. It had not won through its effort to gain admission from the Son of God that life was materially conceived and supported, that material bread was necessary to sustain life. This effort had egregiously failed. No more had success attended upon the effort to have this divinely conceived one break with the traditional religion, to cast himself free from all relation with the forms of worship so long followed by the Jewish race.

Now a last and greatest of all temptations was to be presented. Here was something dear to the hearts of men, something too alluring, too attractive to be denied. No longer is the case presented with an "if." All that could be seen from a high mountain, that is, from a mental state in which could be envisioned the kingdoms of the whole world, with all their splendor and evidences of power deriving from unlimited possessions, with all the glory attaching to exalted position and great treasure, with all that the carnal mind seeks and craves—all this did the adversary offer Jesus as the reward—for what? For repudiating his holy mission, for denying the Father who had so greatly endowed him, for turning his back entirely upon things of the Spirit, for accepting the rewards of the carnal mind which satisfy the physical senses to the utter obscuration of the spiritual, for utterly abandoning poor humanity so greatly in need of liberation from its self-imposed bondage.

That this temptation, unlimited in its possibilities of satisfaction to the mortal senses, made no slightest appeal to this Son of God is apparent from his emphatic reply. Deeply stirred by the continued importunity of the devil, the evil one, he replies in these words: "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."⁶ No encouragement to the tempter; no least indication of yielding, but the strongest affirmation of the fact that evil in whatever guise, materiality in its most attractive form, could gain no inroads upon the spiritually illumined Jesus. He was not to be turned from his holy purpose by the offerings of the world, of the flesh and the devil.

The tempter, defeated at every point, thereupon gave up his wicked efforts to corrupt him who was to become the Way-Shower and Saviour to all mankind, and departed. Great was the victory, so great that angels came to comfort and minister to Jesus. How like, in certain aspects, the experience of every mortal! When tempted, when confronted by the wiles of evil, he who withstands the machinations of the tempter is blessed by the assurance of well-doing, and his angel visitants are the joyous thoughts attendant upon the triumph of good over evil, of Spirit over matter.

So complete was the victory of Jesus over these concerted efforts of evil, that the world was literally put under his feet. Thenceforth he was above the temptations of the flesh. He had met and mastered those phases of the carnal mind which every mortal has to conquer in gaining mental ascendancy over the conditions attendant upon material existence.

The lesson Christians derive from this exalting experience is that the road to salvation and true being must be traversed by all who would gain that state of conscious-

⁶ Matthew 4:10.

ness which is above temptation; and once that exalted mental state is attained, angels, spiritual ideas, do attend; the expressions of life and love become one's constant companions.

Through the wilderness experience, Christ Jesus became the great Exemplar to humanity of two essential facts: first, of the necessity for overcoming every phase of evil that the carnal mind can present; second, that these temptations can be mastered by the direct understanding of the truth about God, about man, about reality. That his demonstration of mastery was complete is assured by his later declaration, "for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."⁷ "The prince of this world" was personal sense, which presented the most alluring attractions of the flesh, of the carnal mind. These tempters met no response in a mentality stabilized in Truth and consequently freed from all false beliefs and fleshly claims.

Jesus' forty days in the wilderness became the preparatory school for the great work ahead. It was a necessary experience, in which the slightest compromise with materiality would have greatly impaired, if not have utterly obscured, the spiritual vision which was to be needed, not only in his mighty works but in the last and greatest triumph—the resurrection from the rock-hewn tomb. In his wilderness experience he became willing to deny all that mortals prize most highly—exalted position, home, family, even great material possessions. He was to become a homeless wanderer, so far as an earthly home is concerned, but he had gained that eternal home whence he came and wherein as the Son of God he would ever abide. Could any price be too dear for such an attainment?

⁷ John 14:30.

VIII

Early Ministry

LUKE and John place the calling of his disciples by Jesus at the Sea of Galilee upon his arrival there from Jordan. Matthew and Mark indicate that on his return from his experience with John he went at once to his home in Nazareth and there in the synagogue preached his first sermon. Yet an incident of this experience as recorded plainly indicates that he had first been to Capernaum.

Be that as it may, Jesus' experience in Nazareth, his home town, must have awakened him to the opposition aroused when accustomed habits of thought are challenged. It was common usage on the Sabbath day to invite a visiting rabbi to take care of the religious ceremony. He usually read from the Law and the Prophets and discoursed upon some phase of the Scriptures which he had read. Accordingly, Jesus was invited to read on the occasion of his home-coming. Here was one of their own who had grown up among them, had been taught in their schools, had even worked at a trade as did other youths of the community. Here was the son of the village carpenter pretending to be a teacher, a rabbi. How could they accept him as prepared to teach them concerning holy things?

Having read from Isaiah the prophecy of the coming of the Messiah, Jesus closed the books and said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."¹ It is significant that the passage read prophesied the coming of a

¹ Luke 4:21.

divinely appointed messenger, both to preach and to heal, to deliver those in bondage, to give sight to the blind and freedom to the oppressed.

We can well understand the keen interest, friendly or hostile, aroused by the words of this young man, the carpenter's son, now, at least by implication, indicating that he was indeed the long-looked-for Messiah, who was to be the hope and Redeemer of Israel. He apparently expected his hearers to require of him a repetition of the works done in Capernaum, report of which had already reached their ears. But recognizing their unreadiness to receive the Christ-message which he was commissioned to bear, he declared, "No prophet is accepted in his own country."² And he pointed out that by the Scriptural record those had received the blessing of God who were prepared to receive it, implying the lack of receptivity of his auditors, his neighbors.

This angered the audience, and they set upon him, taking him to the brow of a steep hill to throw him over. But, rising superior to their designs, he, "passing through the midst of them went his way."³ Here Jesus manifested his ability by means of his spiritual understanding to overcome physical opposition, even when sprung from murderous intent. There could be no better example of the depth of feeling stirred among the orthodox Jews of that time when opposed in their ancient beliefs. They were ready to destroy their own townsman because he had bared something of their spiritual sterility. This was, indeed, a foretaste of the intense hatred that was to be aroused against him as his mission, buttressed by his mighty works, was to become better known.

Beside the road which leads from Nazareth to the Lake of Galilee, lies Cana, a hamlet, by a meandering stream.

² Luke 4:24.

³ Luke 4:30.

Hither on the occasion of a wedding came Jesus, with friends, including his mother. Now a wedding was a festive affair, a gathering of the kinsmen and friends of the bride and groom for a period of merrymaking. During the process of the feast, the supply of wine became exhausted. Jesus' mother called his attention to the situation. The words attributed to the Master in reply to his mother seem harsh, unless it be recognized that he was exemplifying the great fact that as the Christ, the Son of God, he could recognize no human parentage. He was to prove in full measure the divine origin of the Spirit which anointed him.

Taking no offense at his words, Mary instructed the attendants to do what he told them. When the water jar had been filled at Jesus' direction, he bade them draw out, and they found that the water had become wine of excellent quality. Why should it be thought strange that this man of God, with his consciousness of God's presence and power, should have utilized his understanding to break the material laws regarding the production of wine? Was not his mission, in part, as he later proved so conclusively, to annul man-made (material) laws whenever necessary? His understanding enabled him here, as in many instances in his later experience, to set aside and overcome material phenomena through the application of spiritual Law, God's Law, whereby He governs His universe.

The attempt to cite this incident in support of the use of intoxicants is an outstanding example of the extent to which mortals will go to carry a point, even if that point be evil. Palestine was a country of grape culture, and markets were few and far. Wine was as common a product of the country as olive oil. Its manufacture and use were in no wise prohibited. Jesus took advantage of the incident to make an impressive demonstration

of his divine endowment. He was the Messiah and must be so recognized.

Leaving Cana, Jesus took up his residence in Capernaum, a town on the west side of the lake, for reasons variously ascribed to him. Some scholars see in his journeying to Galilee immediately after John's imprisonment, a desire to escape the same fate. That is, he went as a precautionary step against the rising wrath of the authorities. Others hold that he went in defiance of the tetrarch of Galilee, Herod Antipas, whom Jesus later described as "that fox." It appears, however, that he never came into the presence of this Herod until during the days of his trial in Jerusalem. It seems probable that he chose this region for his teaching and demonstrations because it was apart from the center of Jewish worship in Jerusalem.

Settled temporarily at Capernaum, a thriving town, pulsating with the activities of the times, Jesus set about preparing himself for his great work. He had become increasingly convinced that he was to accept the role of Messiah; that he was in fact chosen of God for the holy purpose of making God manifest to men, of interpreting Divinity to a needy world. In order to establish himself in this exalted ministry, it was necessary to have a band of loyal followers, eager and faithful students of his teachings, who would assist him in his supreme effort not alone to establish the fact of God's Kingdom as ever at hand, but to establish this state of consciousness with those everywhere receptive to his message.

Upon his arrival in Galilee, the little band which had followed him from his baptism at Jordan had departed to their respective homes. Now they were recalled, together with others, twelve in all, including those who had been most receptive to his teachings.

It appears that apart from the desire of the Master to

gather a group of students who were faithful because they had caught the meaning of his message, his desire was also for a body of defenders against the opposition which he knew would be stirred against him, as he proceeded in his active ministry. Therefore he chose with a double purpose. It has been said that one of the greatest miracles in all history was the transformation of these men chosen from the masses into the successful founders of Christianity. Four of these Jesus had known as followers of John the Baptist. It seems that they were with John when he baptized Jesus.

Peter, Andrew, James, and John dwelt in Bethsaida, harbor town of Capernaum. All the chosen were men of action and stability, and all were Galileans except Judas. He had come from Kerioth, south of Hebron, a long way from Galilee, indicating that he had made a considerable effort in order to become a disciple of this newly arrived preacher and healer of mankind. Jesus of necessity chose his immediate disciples from the masses, not from the aristocracy of the period. Humility and willingness to obey God's mandate were qualities necessary to those who should receive and propagate the divine message. The lowly in heart were more receptive to the coming of the Christ than the proud and haughty.

Something of the care expressed by Jesus in the selection of the Twelve may be seen in Luke's statement that "he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God,"⁴ before choosing the Twelve who were to be his closest companions and apostles during the vital yet dangerous months ahead.

The incidents which led up to the calling of the Twelve related by Matthew are of prime interest.

⁴ Luke 6:12.

Jesus, walking along the shore of Galilee, saw Simon and Andrew, his brother, engaged in their accustomed vocation as fishermen. Then it was that he called them to become fishers of men, and they answered the call. A little farther along the shore he saw James and John, sons of Zebedee, mending their nets. These he also called, "and they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him."⁵

Later Jesus found Philip, a fellow citizen of Andrew and Peter, and called him. Philip, meeting Nathanael, told him that they had found him of whom Moses and the Prophets had written, and he was Jesus of Nazareth. Nathanael, apparently greatly surprised, exclaimed, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"⁶ Philip invited him to come and meet the Master. When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, quickly perceiving his character, he said, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" To Nathanael's query, "How is it that you know me?" Jesus responded, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." This so convinced Nathanael of Jesus' spiritual quality that he exclaimed, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." Jesus told him that he would see much greater things than his clear insight into Nathanael's character.

The fact that these fishermen became followers of Jesus at his call does not necessarily imply that they entirely abandoned their vocation as fishermen. The great Jewish teachers had their followers who pursued regular vocations, apart from their attendance upon their rabbis. That these fishermen went back to their trade as fishermen after the crucifixion would indicate that they did not altogether abandon their accustomed work even

⁵ Matthew 4:22.

⁶ John 1:46 ff.

when becoming disciples of the Nazarene. It is not clear that all the Twelve followed Jesus continuously during his ministry.

The names of the Twelve differ slightly in arrangement, as recorded in Matthew and Mark. They appear in the former as follows: Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, son of Alphaeus, Thaddeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot. Luke substitutes for Thaddeus, Judas, son of James. Of the first six chosen by Jesus, Peter was most prominent in laying the foundation of Christianity. He was impulsive and extremely unstable, yet kind and active. While he denied and repudiated his relation to his Master in the hour of great trial, yet it must not be overlooked that his preaching converted three thousand persons to the Christian doctrine at one time.⁷ And it was this same disciple who led the work of preaching the Gospel in Jerusalem and became the faithful assistant to Paul in Rome. As we have seen, scholars generally believe that Mark obtained his material for the most part from Peter. And it was Peter's clear perception of the Christ upon which Jesus declared he would found his church.

James and John, characterized as sons of Zebedee, were, it seems, strenuous and fearless men, ardent in their devotion to him whom they had so quickly accepted as the Messiah. It seems from the Biblical account that John, too, was impulsive, even hotheaded, if we judge from Luke 9:54, which indicates that he would have punished severely a Samaritan community which was unfriendly to his Master. As we shall see elsewhere, Peter, James, and John were regarded by Jesus as the most receptive of all the disciples to the spiritual import

⁷ Acts 2:41.

of his teachings. This was proved by the special favors shown them. It seems that these three were spiritually nearer the Master and best understood his desire and plan for evangelizing humanity.

The only intimation as to the character of Thomas is found in the Fourth Gospel, and there he is represented as a doubter, one who had to have visible evidence in order to become convinced of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Yet when shown the evidence, he readily believed. Simon was known as "Zelotes" because of his membership in a group who believed that violence should be used in establishing the Kingdom of God. Some scholars believe he was a member of the group that had led a revolt against Rome some years before. He was a sincere devotee to a cause which he espoused. This may have influenced the Master in choosing him.

Simon was also called the Canaanite, an appellation in Mark and Matthew which is the equivalent in Aramaic to the term "Zelotes" used in Luke. It seems that this body of Zealots was strong enough in Galilee to have been ready to challenge the Roman authority. The presence of Simon in the Twelve indicates that Jesus drew from the middle class respectable men of courage and readiness to act when action was needed. It has been said of these Zealots that they were better acquainted with deeds than with creeds.

Judas has been a puzzle to Biblical scholars. Why did Jesus, with his keen intuitive sense in reading human nature, select this man who was to become his betrayer? No one can certainly answer. One theory regarding Judas is that he betrayed Jesus because he wished to witness the ability of the Master to extricate himself from the serious conditions in which he would find himself. An old tradition may explain the situation. In the long ago an artist planned to paint the Twelve grouped about

the Master in various attitudes and facial expressions. His models were selected with great care. He found as a model for John a strikingly handsome young man with the face and presence of a true Apollo; beyond his physical charm was a look of high purpose and spiritual power which bespoke a touch of the divine presence. He seemed to be the ideal representative of the beloved disciple.

When the artist sought for a model for Judas, he went to the lowest part of his city, among the sinful and criminal. He searched a long time for one with the proper looks, but in vain. Finally he chanced upon one whose hardened facial expression and physical appearance quite satisfied him. A bargain was made, and the man came to the studio to represent Judas in what was to be a famous painting.

As the work proceeded, one day, as the model was intently observing the face of John in the picture, the artist exclaimed, "That is a handsome face." "Yes," the model replied, "that was once my own." Five years before he had sat for the portrait of John. During the intervening years a life of sin and shame had transformed a handsome youth, clean and of high purpose, into the model of a criminal bearing all the marks of a misspent life.⁸ It seems that the inner life determines the outward appearance.

Nothing is known of the lives of the remainder of the Twelve. Some scholars represent Philip and Bartholomew as having taken the Gospel to Phrygia. Thomas is said to have gone to Parthia for the same purpose. Tradition has it that Peter was crucified in Rome, with his head down because of his remorse for having denied his Master on that fateful night in Jerusalem. It is generally

⁸ *Achievement of the Master*, Purinton & Costello, pp. 70, 71.

believed that John went to Asia Minor and became a bishop in Ephesus.

It is evident from the incident in the third chapter of Mark that Jesus in entering upon his ministry had broken away entirely from the ties of the flesh, that is, so far as human kinship is concerned. He declared in no unmis-takable terms who his true relatives were, and, looking about upon those near him, apparently his chosen ones, he exclaimed, "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother."⁹ There could scarcely be adduced more convincing proof of the spir-itual status of this man of God than his complete repudi-ation of what is regarded as the strongest and dearest of all human ties—one's relation to his mother.

Jesus had indeed launched his barque upon the limit-less sea of spiritual endeavor whose farthest shore was the infinite Unseen, where the real man eternally abides. This was a most important step in the life of Jesus. For thirty-three years he had followed the familiar path of human relationship, had acknowledged the ties of kinship as commonly recognized. Now he had embarked upon a type of spiritual ministry, the success of which de-pended in no small degree upon his ability to separate himself from all earthly incumbrances, even those of his own family, in order to serve the Father to the utmost possibility of demonstration.

Of the significance of the step there can be no doubt. Thereafter he was, in the human sense, to be a wanderer. He was to be homeless and with no family ties. His faithful brethren were to be to him all that kinsmen mean to another. That he was aware of the significance of his renunciation, there can be no doubt. His own words

⁹ Mark 3:34 ff.

poignantly convey it. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."¹⁰ There were to be no backward glances, no turning back to his home ties in Nazareth. His words were positive, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."¹¹ That he "was out of his mind" his relatives believed. How little did they recognize the mission this Son of God was to fulfill, the greatest that has ever befallen to an earth-dweller!

Some scholars see in the number of the Apostles—twelve—a relationship to the twelve tribes of Israel. As the Apostles were not drawn from all the twelve tribes, the claim seems to be irrelevant. On the shore of the Sea of Galilee, about which was to center the major part of his ministry, Jesus assembled, taught, and inspired the little band which was to serve him so intimately, and to play so large a part in the founding of the Christian Church after his departure.

Following the selection of his disciples, Jesus definitely began his ministry in Galilee. It consisted of preaching, of teaching as a rabbi, of healing sickness and sin, and of overcoming material law as expressed in divers forms. He taught by healing, and healed by his teachings. So impressed were the people by his words, his messages of redemption, that the multitudes flocked to him in such great numbers that at times he was nearly overwhelmed. He even sat in a boat near the shore in order to escape the press of the crowd. His message was so unlike the preaching to which they were accustomed that it called listeners from near and far. Here was a new religion, a way of present redemption, a means of immediate salvation, for the Kingdom of God was at hand.

¹⁰ Matthew 8:20.

¹¹ Luke 9:62.

It is difficult to conceive of the deep impression his words made upon his multitude of listeners. So familiar has the message of the Gospel become to all Christians that it seems quite impossible to imagine a time in which it was new, novel, startling, to its hearers. No dogmatism, no sacrificial ceremony, no formalism, but repentance, reformation, a transformed state of consciousness, which constituted the Kingdom of Heaven, and that "within you."¹² How novel! How unique! How unlike the old demands of the Law! No wonder that the multitude came from Tyre and from Lydda from beyond Jordan, from the countryside far and near, to hear this new and assured way to salvation!

Then the healing works! What a sensation must have been created when diseases regarded as incurable were instantaneously healed! Dread leprosy, malaria, epilepsy, blindness, paralysis—all gave way before the words spoken by this preacher of a new religion. It is little wonder that the people came in such numbers that the paralytic had to be let down through the roof; that at times Jesus was obliged to withdraw to the country for quiet and refreshment through prayer. He cast out demons, as certain types of evil were characterized in that day, and through his healing ministry was establishing the Kingdom of God, proving beyond possibility of refutation that it was through God's presence that these wonders were wrought.

But this blessed ministry was not to continue without opposition. The powers of evil were being aroused by the very success of this extraordinary rabbi. He was even usurping divine power by claiming to forgive sin. "Thy sins be forgiven thee,"¹³ stirred the Pharisees to active resistance. Especially was this manifest after he

¹² Luke 17:21.

¹³ Matthew 9:2.

had called Matthew, an employee of Herod, from his place as tax collector, to become one of his disciples. Now this act, as we have noted, especially stirred opposition. A tax gatherer was the object of deep, even violent, aversion. He was a servant of the Roman authority and a robber of the people! He was collecting money from the Jewish people without justification! These and other arguments raised an opposition that was presently to become violent.

Another source of opposition was the disregard which Jesus showed toward time-honored caste. He companioned with the lowly, those regarded as socially far below the plain of aristocratic Pharisee and Sadducee. On occasion, however, he was a guest in the homes of the wealthy and socially prominent. In fact he completely ignored social status, established by the custom of the times. He came to help all humanity to find the Kingdom. He was no respecter of social laws and customs. He did, however, obey the civic law. He rendered unto Caesar the things that belonged to him under the law.

IX

The Sermon on the Mount

THE most comprehensive of all the Master's discourses, often termed the Sermon on the Mount, constitutes a perfect compendium for righteous living. It points the way out of human error into that state of consciousness called the Kingdom of Heaven. It is indeed the way to salvation from every form of evil, from every mental foe with which mortals are confronted. Its time and place of delivery are of small importance compared to the import of its message. Many scholars now believe it to be a compilation of teachings brought together in two of the Gospels. Others regard it as having been a sermon, a discourse delivered at one time and in a given place, namely, on a mountainside.

Whatever the circumstances surrounding its delivery, no moral or ethical teaching in all time has made a greater impression upon human thought than has this consummate expression of righteousness. It reaches the very acme of true ethical teaching, based not upon a personal humanism but upon the great fact of an all-present divine Father, who is Spirit, who is Life, who is Love; and it teaches that man as the child of God is sinless and perfect, ever immune to the approach of sin, of evil in every form. Only the mortal, the false sense of man, is susceptible to the moods of the destroyer, and this sermon shows mortals the perfect way to freedom, to salvation from evil, from sin in its multifarious forms.

The Beatitudes constitute an introduction to the major discourse, a prologue at once appealing and important.

Who are to receive of the richness of God's blessings, the fullness of His gifts to His children? They who are receptive to the Father's gifts, who are cast down, they are relieved from a sense of loss: they who are humble, who recognize the omnipotence of good and the consequent unreality of the false, the mortal sense of man—these are the meek; they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, who, weary of the ways of the flesh, turn to God for strength and solace; the merciful, they who are charitable and forgiving toward the erring—they shall receive mercy: the peacemakers, they who undertake to establish the peace of God in a troubled earth, the peace based upon recognition of and obedience to God's will—those blessed of the Father shall be denominated God's children.

Furthermore, they who suffer because of their obedience to the Father, who are persecuted because of their righteousness before men, they, too, are blessed, for they shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, the state of consciousness in which the child of God eternally abides. Jesus was well aware of the abuse which the evil-minded, the wicked, heap upon those walking in the Spirit. He conceived for them a blessed haven of rest and peace. Spiritual comfort had been needed through the ages and would continue to be needed as long as evil claimed dominance among men.

With this reassuring prelude, the Master launches into the body of his discourse. Those who have received the spirit of Truth possess that which redeems mankind. This spiritual quality has the saving savor of salt; it has the luminance of light. Its possessor does not hide but makes himself known to his fellows, not arrogantly, not ostentatiously, not to exalt himself, but that others may become aware of the effect of the spirit of Truth when received into consciousness.

There follows a declaration of the purpose of the Christ, the appearance of the Messiah at that period. He came not to destroy what of good had been set forth in the Law and by the Prophets. He came rather to amplify, fulfill, and demonstrate the practicability of Truth. Nothing of Truth is to be lost. But amplification will follow until the Christ becomes wholly manifest. They who break the Commandments will be of little importance, but they who keep them will win a full reward. The righteousness which wins the Kingdom must be true righteousness, devoid of all hypocrisy, for the hypocrite—the scribe and the Pharisee—excludes himself from the heavenly state.

Not alone is murder condemned as by the Law of Moses, but unjustifiable anger, the belittling of another, shall be punished, for it is in substance a murderous attack upon the soul of man. Peace, lasting peace, can be had only by those who free themselves of all animosity, of all quarreling with their fellows. Agreement with the adversary is a requisite to peacemaking; for only by knowing that the adversary, so far as he is in the wrong, is governed by evil, but in reality is the child of God, can peace be established. There can be no quarrel between God's children.

Adultery is broadened to include lustful thinking, not of necessity a physical act. Whatever of evil is held in human consciousness is to be cast out, even one's most cherished beliefs; even the right eye and the right hand, if these symbolize evil beliefs which may not enter the spiritual state, even these must be sacrificed. No evil can enter God's Kingdom, and only as all falsity is cast out can the heavenly state be realized.

Especially did the Master define the evils of divorce-ment, characterizing the situation in no unmistakable terms. The evil of false speaking receives his stern dis-

approval, the injunction being to limit one's conversation to the simplest forms of speech. Jesus well knew that much speaking, volubility, tends to false and even cruel statements.

Of special import is Jesus' teaching regarding resistance to evil. Nothing is gained, he indicates, by meeting evil with evil. Rather must it be met with good; one must fearlessly confront error in the assurance that, clad in purity of thought and motive, one cannot be harmed. To him who would have one's coat, give him even more—one's "cloak"—that he may know the generosity of the children of the Father. And if one is compelled to go a mile with an offender, go with him one more, for in that second mile, traversed with joy and in the Christian spirit, there may be excellent opportunity for healing him of the falsity which has prompted him to place another under duress. Be generous in the sharing of one's bounty with others, for in the very sharing is blessing, and the example can scarcely fail to have a salutary effect upon the asker, the beggar.

Jesus' discourse upon the proper attitude toward those regarded as one's enemies is of far-reaching importance in developing true Christian character. When it is recognized that the mortal, material sense of man is but a false concept of man, that the real, in fact, the only, man is the child of God, spiritual and perfect, the problem takes on a new aspect. It can scarcely be reasonable that God demands love of the unlovely, of the mortal man manifesting hatred, anger, greed, and all unlovely traits. But looking through this mirage of error and finding man's true selfhood, God's likeness, beautiful, lovely in every phase, the problem is resolved. We love our neighbor who is altogether lovely, for he is God's true and perfect representative. If we love only those who love us, our demonstration is on a material basis. But

knowing that man's true selfhood is the only reality of man eliminates the belief that an enemy exists, and the command is fulfilled.

Even the morally inclined, materially minded love those who love them. The demand of God goes much further. God, who is Love, loves all His creation, all His children. Why? Because they express Him and therefore possess no quality unlike Him. This understanding removes the sense of an enemy, for it establishes the brotherhood of man, a union in Christ, into which enmity cannot enter.

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."¹ This demand of the Master sets the highest possible goal of existence, toward the accomplishment of which mortals are to strive, with the assurance that man's true selfhood is already perfect. This assurance speeds the purpose of attaining that state of consciousness where the perfect man eternally abides. If this attainment of perfection were not possible, Jesus' words would become a mockery. But our Lord and Saviour was not a mocker. His words were spoken with solemnity and for the highest purpose, to show humanity how to attain to man's true heritage, their God-given perfection and the consequent dominion over evil in its every form.

That Jesus set this goal of perfection for mortals to strive for, should be a great stimulus to all who heed his words. He never set impossible tasks before his followers. To be sure, sometimes they seemed impossible, but they were highly possible when his point of view was gained. Surely "with God all things are possible";² and, since Jesus was cognizant of the divine omnipotence and its availability through spiritual understanding, he saw

¹ Matthew 5:48.

² Matthew 19:26.

every desirable goal within the sure accomplishment of all who seek God righteously.

The Master's pronouncements regarding prayer are of the greatest significance, for he established the true basis of prayer both in its letter and spirit. He was fully cognizant of the public praying indulged in for the purpose of impressing mortal mind with one's piety, when in the heart there was no true humility, no sure recognition of the divine Source of all being, no acknowledgment of God as the Source of all good. Upon such prayer he looked with stern disapproval. It was the act of the hypocrite, of him who would debase the most sacred form of worship. For such he had strong condemnation.

But Jesus did not leave this all-important subject with mere negation and disapproval. He did not confine his teaching to what prayer should not be. He defined true prayer, even to its precise form. In thy closet, in the sanctuary of earnest desire, in the innermost consciousness, the spiritual sense of reality, is true prayer attained. It is the recognition of man's relation to God. Not through vain repetition, not through much speaking, but through the heartfelt desire to be and to do good is true prayer achieved. The all-knowing Father already knows the need of His children and has already supplied that need. Prayer, then, has the holy purpose of bringing into consciousness this profound fact. And prayer is successful, is answered, in proportion to the completeness of the realization of God's presence.

Particularly does the Master in this most comprehensive of all sermons urge the necessity of asking the Father for the blessings desired. "Ask, and it shall be given you."³ The reward of prayerful asking, of earnest,

³ Matthew 7:7.

righteous seeking, will be the reception of the blessings desired. But righteous seeking and understanding prayer are the conditions for success in approach to the Father. Righteous prayer, seeking first the spiritual truth, brings that which mortals require for harmonious living, in such terms as best meet the human need.

God is not changed in His holy purpose by human supplication. Rather is the thought of the one praying righteously lifted into the realization that infinite Love has already supplied every real need; has fulfilled every righteous desire. His creation is perfect and complete. There is no deficiency, no lack, in His universe of perfect being. Prayer thus becomes the affirmation of facts that already exist in the realm of reality. The element of petition, the asking God to do for His children, lifts the consciousness of the one praying toward the divine Source of all good. This renders thought more receptive to the blessings God has already bestowed upon His beloved.

No words can disclose the deep significance of the Lord's Prayer, the model set before his most intimate followers. Fully comprehended, righteously repeated, it does indeed meet every need of humanity. Forgiveness is a prime factor in this consummate prayer. But mortals seek forgiveness righteously only when they, too, have forgiven their debtors. To forgive as we would be forgiven is the true forgiveness.

Fasting is likewise a holy experience. Not mere abstinence from the eating of material food constitutes true fasting, but rather the withdrawing from the belief of life in matter and of a material universe, the better to abide in the consciousness of spiritual reality, of God's presence, and the reality of being. Mere semblance of fasting, a sad and disfigured face, makes no appeal to God. He knows nothing of it. But the uplifted

thought, the spiritual desire, the humble petition, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, this mental state can scarcely fail to reach the heart of infinite Love.

The most direct instruction regarding the uselessness of seeking material treasure for its own sake is found within this masterly sermon. Material treasure of whatever form or nature is at the most impermanent. It is here today and may be gone tomorrow. It belongs wholly in the category of the things which are seen, the temporal things. Poor humanity, blind to its true status as of the royal household of God, struggles, strives, works for the very treasure which the Great Teacher so thoroughly condemned. He knew full well that material seeking shuts the door against the influx of spiritual light. He knew full well that what one seeks most assiduously reveals the mental state. He also knew that the treasures which abide in Heaven, in spiritual consciousness, are the only riches that endure, that possess lasting worth. With this feature of Jesus' discourse belongs that injunction which constitutes the perfect rule of action, the rule which insures success in every type of right human enterprise. And this rule presupposes righteous motives, for the unrighteous is by its very nature excluded from this beneficent law of successful service. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."⁴ The purpose of every mortal's endeavor then should be to enter the Kingdom, to serve God. And God is served in human experience by every real service to mankind. Putting the love of true service first, above the mere desire for profit, for personal gain, is righteous seeking. It fulfills the Law. Righteousness is gained by righteous purpose made effective. This fundamental rule, firmly established, as-

⁴ Matthew 6:33.

sure success. The needed things will be added. Such is the divine promise. And God's promises are kept.

It is more than passing strange that so plain a road to success, so simple and withal so direct, has had so few followers. Christ Jesus was incomparably the most successful man who ever appeared on earth. He never knew failure and he left perfect instructions for successful accomplishment. Yet poor humanity, enslaved in the bonds of materiality, has paid all too little heed to his wise words. It is little wonder, when he contemplated the ways of poor humanity, its love of the flesh and all material sense, that he wept over Jerusalem.

The mental state open to the light of Truth is the state receptive to complete spiritual illumination. This is the eye single. But if the vision be of materiality with all its evil accompaniments, then the body, the material state, is darkened. It is impossible to serve both Spirit and matter, both good and evil. Love of the one precludes love of the other. The servant of Mammon, god of materiality, is the servant of evil, not the servant of God, of good. Invariably did Jesus exalt spiritual endeavor to the deprecation of materiality for its own sake. He by no means condemned riches, but he condemned the love of riches for their own sake. None knew so well as he that such love inevitably darkened human consciousness, shut out the light of salvation and freedom. He knew that the materially minded, persisting in a state of darkness, could by no means add even a cubit to their mental stature. For such growth could obtain only from spiritual insight as to the real status of man.

And he drew from the lilies of the field, the beautiful ranunculus, anemones which in spring clothe the hills of Palestine with deepest red (the royal purple), the priceless lesson of God's beneficence. The divine all-Father clothes the earth with these floral hieroglyphs which have

only to obey the divine mandate of growth. Yet in their beauty they surpass all the grandeur of royalty, even the splendor of the great Solomon. Jesus saw in these floral tributes the evidence of divine beauty and goodness. He saw poor humanity of little faith, with all its lack and misery, living in darkness, blind to and ignorant of God's blessings, which are always at hand when mortals are ready to reach out for the incomparable gifts provided by an all-wise Father.

Living each day in the consciousness of the divine presence and bounty would remove the strain and stress of life. God's promises are kept. Mortals have but to receive what has already been provided. But this beneficence is first of all spiritual; it must be sought through prayer and fasting.

Furthermore, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus plainly showed his intimate knowledge of the workings of the carnal mind, of the foibles and eccentricities of mortals. Conscious of the tendency to criticize others, which so commonly characterizes mankind, and aware of the implication of this tendency, the Master named it specifically for correction. Judgment of another sets one up as judge, and in due time judgment is turned back upon oneself. He carries the argument ever further. The judge, the critic, often undertakes to correct faults in another when he may be guilty of even greater offenses himself. "Why behold the splinter in another's eye when there is a whole plank in one's own eye"—Moffatt's translation of the words usually rendered "mote" and "beam." Such judgment is ill-founded, hypocritical. The need to cleanse oneself of faults before undertaking to correct another is the significance of this message. Only through the vision cleared of all obstruction can one see clearly enough to judge another. Consciousness

thus purified loses all tendency or desire to maximize the faults of another.

No phase of these teachings so completely summarizes the whole as the brief statement commonly termed the Golden Rule. This was not a new teaching, for older religions had contained the same sentiment in varying language. But no one had set it forth so explicitly and withal so appealingly as did the Nazarene. So important did he regard it that he described it as both the Law and the Prophets. Not only had it been incorporated in the Law which had governed Israel, but it was in great measure the central teachings of the Prophets. It is the very acme of righteous living. It is the foundation, the *sine qua non*, of Christian character. When generally adopted, it will insure peace to all the world, the peace that endures because it is founded upon the true brotherhood.

Greatly did Jesus emphasize the need to pursue the straight and narrow way, the way of Spirit, in contrast to the ways of the flesh. The one, the way to lasting joy and eternal life; the other, the headlong course to disaster and destruction. The choice is open to all. It must be made by each for himself. There is no vicarious entrance into the Kingdom. Each must gain for himself through transformation of mentality that mental state which is the "mind of Christ."⁵ Another may show one the way, may place one's feet in it, but the steps must be taken by each traveler in the narrow way.

Jesus was master of the use of parables. None has ever exceeded his skill in driving home a primary proposition with the greatest emphasis through the medium of a telling comparison or metaphor. No better example of this is needed than is found in the closing summary

⁵ I Corinthians 2:16.

of the Sermon on the Mount: Two men, one wise, the other foolish, build their houses. The former, having gained the wisdom which is from on High, lays a firm foundation, the Rock, Christ, against which the storms of mortal mind beat in vain. The other, following the ways of the flesh, builds on a false basis, upon the sands of mortal mind, shifting with every tide, with every wind. Can there be any doubt as to the endurance of the structures built upon these foundations? The one will stand forever because it is based on the lasting and permanent, the eternal Christ; the other rests upon turbulence and stress, the instability of that which has no permanency. There can be no doubt as to the righteous builder. The Christ is forever.

X

Jesus Returns to Galilee

WHEN Jesus appeared a second time at Cana, a nobleman, having heard of the Master's healing ministry, came begging that Jesus would come and heal his son, who was critically ill. Jesus, to test his faith, said to him, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe."¹ Not to be put off, the nobleman urged him to hasten else his son would die. Out of his perfect understanding that God is man's life, not incorporated in or supported by matter, Jesus said to him, "Go thy way; thy son liveth."² The nobleman believed him and started toward home. The next day, on the way, his servant met him and informed him that his son was alive. In answer to his query as to when the healing took place, the father learned that it was at the hour when Jesus had said, "Thy son liveth."³

Here is the perfect example of the operation of the healing Christ, when the one in need was not in the presence of the healer. The infinite Mind, through the healing Christ, everywhere present, and applied with understanding, was made practical in destroying the claims of error. Jesus' healing ministry was in proof of his teachings. Without the practical application of his words in proof of their authority, his teachings would have been much less impressive. When, however, his words were accompanied by successful demonstrations,

¹ John 4:48.

² John 4:50.

³ John 4:51.

there could be no doubt that his teaching mission was divinely authorized. He proved his faith by his works so effectually that no one, except through lack of spiritual vision, could doubt that he was the expected Messiah, the Christ, sent of God to release poor humanity from its age-old bondage.

Jesus' ministry reached to many and varied activities of the people. Constantly mingling with the masses, he found opportunity to demonstrate the divine Presence and power to correct many untoward conditions. On one occasion, at his request, the boat from which he had been instructing the multitude was moved farther into the lake. Thereupon he directed Simon, who had toiled all night at the fishing with no success, to let down his net. It was immediately filled with many fishes, enough to load Simon's boat and that of his partners.

Jesus' spiritual understanding of God and His omnipotence gave him complete control over material phenomena whenever he chose to exercise this power, divinely derived. And he never exercised this power for personal gain. It is little wonder that these poor fishermen were astonished at what they saw. As we have seen, so impressed were Simon's partners, James and John, that they immediately left their nets, gave up their vocation as fishermen, to become disciples of this most marvelous man. Thus, they, too, became fishers—fishers of men—ministering to the needy, the sick, and the sinful.

Divine Mind, being omnipotent, is supreme in the physical realm no less than in the spiritual. The understanding of this enabled Jesus to do many of the mighty works which beyond possibility of doubt proved his position as Messiah, sent of God. The practical potency of his ministry was perfectly illustrated by the healing of a leper. "Be thou clean"⁴ was followed by instant-

⁴ Luke 5:13.

neous healing of this most dread of all the many diseases of the East. To insure obedience to the Judaic ritual, Jesus commanded the man to fulfill the Levitical law by proceeding to the Temple, there to perform the cleansing rite, but to tell no one of what had happened. It is little wonder that, in view of these healing marvels, the multitude from all the countryside brought their sick to be healed. Diseases of various kinds now present in Palestine were even more prevalent in that distant day, and the means of alleviation were meager.

Jesus often went apart to refresh himself through prayer, to commune with the divine Source of his being, the divine All-Father, with whom he was in such complete rapport. Not only the humbler folk, but many of the educated class came to witness the miracles or to be healed, if they were of sufficient faith. Among these were Pharisees and doctors of the law, from "every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem."⁵ When the crowd about the Master became so dense that the bearers of a cot, upon which lay a man sick of the palsy, could not reach him, they went to the roof and let down the impotent one at Jesus' feet. Deeply impressed by their faith, Jesus said to the sick one, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee."⁶ Immediately his words stirred the learned ones. "Who is this that is speaking blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Not to be thwarted in his purpose, Jesus queried, "Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?"⁷

To show that his authority was divine and not to be denied, he declared his power as the Son of man to forgive sins. Thereupon he commanded the sick man to take up his bed and go home, and he went, glorifying

⁵ Luke 5:17.

⁶ Luke 5:20.

⁷ Luke 5:21 ff.

God. The crowd was greatly impressed, for they knew that they had witnessed most unusual happenings. Jesus knew that sin was a mental state, a false belief of the carnal mind, which was the cause of sickness. Sin was forgiven when destroyed in the thought of the sinner. Destruction of sin by understanding its falsity released the sick man. It is little wonder that, freed mentally and physically, the healed man should glorify God, the Source of all good.

It followed close upon this experience that Jesus called Levi (Matthew) from his unpopular position as tax gatherer to become one of the Twelve disciples. When Levi had prepared a feast for the Master and his followers, the malcontents, apparently oblivious to the character and quality of Jesus' mission, complained that he should consort with publicans and sinners, with the lowly and sinful. Jesus' reply was a perfect answer to this querulous complaint. "The sick, not the well, need healing. Not the righteous but sinners need forgiveness." In these words the Nazarene described his mission. It was to heal the sick and sinful and, in healing them, to point the way into the Kingdom of Heaven, not a faraway, indefinite locale, but a mental state, a state of consciousness freed from all materiality, from all false beliefs. It is the mental state receptive to the Christ, Truth, always ready to enter the mentality open to its reception, that gains the Kingdom. If there were those who had already attained to the true state of consciousness, they were not in need of the ministry he was prepared to render. And this Physician, the Christ, the true healer because of his reflection of God, had no need to use material remedies.

From subsequent events it is clear that neither scribe nor Pharisee had attained to a state of receptivity to the Christ message. Their mental doors were scarcely ajar

to the reception of the healing and regenerating Christ.

So contrary to the mental state of the typical Jewish religionist of the first century was the spiritual outlook of the Master, that from the very beginning of his ministry, as we have seen, opposition began to brew. While respecting in general the rites and ceremonies of Jewish worship, even preaching in their synagogues, he also rendered obedience to Roman law so far as it was enforced in Palestine. Yet he departed not one jot or tittle from the course which he conceived to be his as God's messenger.

This attitude had two outstanding illustrations just prior to Jesus' final choice of his disciples. When Jesus and his friends plucked wheat in the fields on the Sabbath day, manifestly to satisfy their hunger, the Pharisees took exception because a law was violated. Wheat should not be plucked on the Sabbath day. Jesus, as always, was ready with a prompt and pertinent reply. Did not David, hungry, eat of the shewbread found in the Sanctuary and prepared only for the priests? The Master denied the Jewish view of the Sabbath as demanding abstinence from necessary activity. To satisfy natural hunger was a practical need.

Again, when he healed a man with a withered hand in a synagogue on the Sabbath day, he was taken to task for similar reason of violation of the holy day. His answer, "Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill?"⁸ confused his questioners and stirred them to anger to the degree that they continued to plot his destruction. Jesus, not unaware of the enmity aroused by his words and works, went into the mountain to pray. Thus did he invariably receive the refreshment and strength to enable him to carry on in

⁸ Mark 3:4.

the midst of the rising tide of hatred which aimed at his destruction.

Jesus was fully capable of reading the thoughts of those about him. His spiritual understanding, that is, his knowledge of God and His Christ, gave him not only the ability to read mortal thought, but also the power, when it was wise and practical, to destroy the false beliefs cherished there. That the degree of receptivity of the one in need was a factor in his healing ministry there can be no doubt. "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief,"⁹ runs the record of his experience in his home city. The desire to be healed, coupled with a willingness to obey, were the conditions of successful demonstration. Coöperation between healer and the sick and sinning brought relief to the sufferer.

⁹ Matthew 13:58.

XI

Jesus' Mighty Works

THE many so-called miracles performed by Christ Jesus have been a potent subject for contention and disagreement among theologians and Bible students from the beginning of recorded Christianity. Some commentators—in fact, many—failing to understand the spiritual nature of the man Jesus, and entirely disregarding his relationship with the Father and the spiritual dominion which that gave him, have decried the miracles as without foundation, as stories fabricated solely for the purpose of bestowing a character of divinity upon the Founder of Christianity. This mental attitude denies important proof, evidence accepted by many that Jesus was Lord and Saviour, the Messiah and Way-Shower to mankind, the veritable Son of God, and fully conscious of that sonship.

False reasoners, holding to a wholly material concept of the Nazarene, eliminate those portions of the Gospels, which, in their type of reasoning, are impractical, supernatural, beyond possibility of actuality, for they seem to nullify material law. And if material law be accepted as inviolable, these conclusions must be accepted as logical and sound. But material so-called law is not inviolable; it is not final. Based as it is upon the supposition that matter is real, hence a law-giver, the thesis falls before the authority of divine omnipotence. If God is infinite, omnipotent, and omnipresent, as is plain from the Scriptures, His Law is the only and final Law which is inviolable, which can never be annulled, abrogated, or

repealed. Divine Law is perfect, final, and sovereign. This is the Law to which Paul so frequently made reference, and of which he declared, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."¹ Here the Apostle to the Gentiles places in perfect juxtaposition the two concepts of law, the true and the false: divine Law which governs God's universe and is inviolable; and a material sense of law based upon the belief of the carnal mind that life, intelligence, and substance inhere in matter.

Physical science has been developed on the latter basis. Its whole structure is shot through with the assumption that natural laws, so-called, the laws which seem to prevail in the material universe, are the only, final, and permanent standards of being, of life and activity. Jesus came to deny this fallacy. If we accept as authentic his teachings and works, then to deny and refute the statements of the Gospels is but the effort of error to destroy spiritual truth and its operations in human affairs. The higher Law, the Law of the "Spirit of life," was known to Jesus and so thoroughly demonstrated that there can be no authoritative denial of his demonstrations.

Now these works wrought by the Master bear no slightest relation to the magic and wonderworks performed by the sorcerers and magicians of the times. To compare the latter with the holy works of the Master is to contrast the forces of evil, masquerading in the garments of truth, with the manifestation of infinite good, the good which is God—to set unreality and falsehood in the category of divine demonstration. The one is error; the other has all the sublimity that attaches to proofs of the divine Presence.

These wondrous works of Jesus, wondrous only to

¹ Romans 8:2.

material sense, to spiritual sense divinely natural, were of many kinds. Among them was the healing of many and divers persons of the various types of sickness so prevalent in the Near East in that distant time. This healing included several so-called incurable diseases, congenital blindness, leprosy, deformity, paralysis, as well as fever and lesser complaints. Sometimes Jesus healed the multitude, that is, the individuals who made up the crowd. Again, the healing was of a single individual. Sometimes the Master was at some distance from the one healed. Time and space were no obstacle to this Son of God, who was so clearly conscious of the power and omnipresence of God, the great Healer, that his ministry was successful whether the sick were present or absent. The healing of the nobleman's son perfectly illustrates this. And as was proven, the healing took place precisely at the time when the truth was uttered.

Through the application of the Law of Life, the Law of spiritual Being, the dead were restored to life as readily as the sick were healed. The raising of the widow of Nain's son, the daughter of Jairus, and finally Lazarus, dead four days, were impressive demonstrations of Jesus' understanding of Life as deathless. This Son of God knew that God is the only Life and that man, God's image and likeness, forever expresses that Life, for man is coexistent and coeternal with infinite Life. This is exactly equivalent to declaring that matter has neither intelligence nor life. Man, God's creature, was never born into matter and in consequence never dies out of matter. This understanding restored to the sense of material existence those who believed they had died.

In the case of Lazarus, the reason for waiting four days before the restoration was manifestly to prove that, notwithstanding the belief that the body was disintegrating, the belief in death could not prevail in the presence of

one who understood precisely what Life is, its source and indestructible continuity. Jesus proved Life to be permanent, not to be destroyed by any type of material belief.

But the demonstration of the superiority of spiritual power over so-called material law in healing sickness and raising the dead was by no means the limit of the Nazarene's work. Time and again he did what in the eyes of onlookers, even to his disciples, seemed miraculous. When necessity seemed to demand it, he walked on the water. Thus he overcame and temporarily nullified the law of gravitation, which, it had been believed, made such an experience impossible. Denial of the incident as a natural occurrence must take one of two forms: either the incident itself is relegated to the realm of falsehood, or the water of Galilee was different from the ordinary water. The latter supposition may be quickly dismissed. The water of Galilee, having its origin in the melting snows of Mt. Hermon, was just pure water, nothing else.

A common tendency of mankind is to deny and reject that which it cannot account for. Therefore, if its thinking be on a material plane, mankind refuses, because unable, to conceive of and accept spiritual phenomena. Because "that which is born of the flesh is flesh,"² they who accept the concept of life as material and of matter as true substance are wholly unprepared to conceive of Spirit as the only true substance and of God's Law as expressive of the dominant Will of the universe. To deny to another the actuality of an experience because one has not had it himself is to close the mind to all outside individual knowledge and impressions.

On the other hand, one is under no obligation to ac-

² John 3:6.

cept what is to him irrational and contrary to common human experience. However, the number of those is increasing who are convinced of the actuality of the presence of divine Power which operates in accordance with spiritual Law, a Law which is available to correct the falsity of material so-called law and its disastrous effects on the human economy.

Furthermore, there are incidents described in the Gospels which to our limited understanding seem exceedingly difficult to explain. Just what caused the swine at Gadara to jump over the cliff may be, and no doubt at the present stage of unfoldment is, a mystery. But some light is shed upon the incident by a knowledge of the accepted beliefs common to the Persian religion that evil consisted of personified demons and that "possession" was a mental state where personal evil entered and possessed and dominated the mentality of a person or animal. It should be understood that the recording of many incidents of the New Testament was influenced by beliefs commonly held at that time. Jesus' complete control of material phenomena was manifest in divers ways, always in such terms as occasion required. It is logical, having once established the basis of his demonstrations as due to the operation of divine Law, to question whatever the record contains of incident that contradicts the general course of those demonstrations.

Another act of the Master's which has excited much controversy and no little disagreement is the blasting of the fig tree. The accounts in the Synoptics agree in all essentials. Being hungry, and seeing a fig tree by the road with its full foliage of green leaves, Jesus looked for fruit upon it. Seeing none, it is recorded that he "cursed" it with the statement that it would never bear fruit. The next morning, as Jesus and his disciples passed by, Peter called attention to its withered condi-

tion. The Master, queried regarding it, impressed his followers with the necessity of having full faith in God, assuring them of the possibilities of great accomplishment through unlimited trust in the divine Power.

Why did Jesus expect fruit on the tree, since the time of figs had not yet come? Does the incident, rather, contain a much deeper significance—that Israel-Jewry was to bear the first fruit of his mission? And were they so backward, so unresponsive that in his great disappointment he blasted the fig tree, as another illustration of the power and presence of God and His availability through the spiritual understanding of this Son of God, who had demonstrated this power upon so many occasions and with such complete success? These are queries which inevitably rise with the thoughtful and which will receive complete answers as the spiritual status of the Nazarene is approximated. Meantime, there is so plentiful a record of the simpler miracles that the Christian is heartened on his way to the complete understanding which will reward his ultimate search.

The incident of the coin in the fish's mouth excites dubiety and denial. The materially minded, who accept the presence and operation only of material law, strive in vain to explain this demonstration. These explanations range all the way from absolute repudiation to the fantastic theory that the fish in question was a female, accustomed, as are her kind, to hold the spawn in her mouth until hatched. And, say they, the little fish remain in the mother's mouth until able to go on their own. Then they are cast out, and usually a pebble is taken in the mouth by the mother fish to prevent their return. This particular fish had, perchance, taken a coin lying on the bottom of the lake. This was the fish that found Peter's hook.

Deeper knowledge of the metaphysical understanding

of this most unique of men would reveal that it was a no more difficult process to objectify a coin in a fish's mouth than it was to feed the five thousand, or to take a boat across the lake. Such complete mastery of material phenomena was possessed by this greatest of metaphysicians that no problem arising in the course of his ministry was unsolvable. He possessed and graphically demonstrated the omnipotence of his divine Source.

An incident, appealingly set forth in John's Gospel, stands out preëminently as illustrative of Jesus' ability, through his knowledge of the Christ, Truth, to destroy a commonly accepted phase of error—blindness—showing his ability to read and thwart the cunning of mortal mind. In its metaphysical implications, the story of the healing of the blind man is of prime importance to him who would be a true disciple of the holy Nazarene.

The story of the blind man is in the ninth chapter. His blindness was, as we say, congenital, that is, from birth. Blindness, both native and acquired, is very common in the Orient, so common that one becomes quite accustomed to seeing it, yet is never reconciled to such dire affliction. One day, as they journeyed, seeing a blind man by the roadside, the disciples asked Jesus, "Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?"³ To this Jesus answered, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

As this passage reads in the King James Version, it appears, if we take it literally, that God had caused the man to be afflicted, in order that the power of God to heal might be made manifest. This, it seems, may be due to wrong punctuation by the translators. The passage continues, "I must work the works of him that

³ John 9:2 ff.

sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

It must be remembered that in the Greek manuscripts, from which this translation was made, there was no punctuation, that is, no division into sentences and phrases; the divisions we have in the Authorized Version were made by the translators. Replacing a period at the end of the sentence with a comma, we read, "but, that the works of God should be made manifest in him, I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day." This completely changes the meaning of the sentence, as it posits as the purpose of the incident, the opportunity for Jesus to prove the presence and power of divine Love to heal discord, even congenital blindness; and it removes from God responsibility for the affliction. This explanation refutes the thought that God could know or cause blindness.

Jesus, you will recall, spat upon the clay, put it upon the man's eyes, and sent him to the pool of Siloam to wash. This the man did, and came seeing. Those who deny the Master's healings by spiritual means attribute this relief from blindness to the effect of the clay and the washing, and they cite it as an example of Jesus' use of material means. This position is wholly untenable. Jesus healed spiritually all manner of diseases. At times, as we have seen, the healing was even accomplished when he was absent from the one in need.

Why should he resort to the use of matter in this case? Surely it was neither clay, spittle, nor water that healed, but Jesus' perfect knowledge that sight is spiritual. Why, then, the clay and spittle? It seems that Jesus used clay and spittle to express his utter contempt for material remedies. The blind man, in common with his fellows, believed matter to be a healing agency. It

was as though Jesus said, "Have matter if you desire it," and he chose the simplest forms of matter at hand—clay and spittle.

Does not this incident also perfectly illustrate the intimate knowledge possessed by the Master of the workings of the carnal mind? He knew that the man's faith would be strengthened by the application of something material and by doing something himself—washing in the pool of Siloam. There could scarcely be a better illustration of the practical nature of Jesus' application of the Christ, Truth, to the meeting of human needs.

A theory also sometimes advanced and worthy of consideration is that Jesus used the clay and spittle to show the unreality of the belief of blindness, so unreal that putting upon the eyes common clay and spittle would heal it. Whatever explanation is accepted, it is far from logic to attribute to the materials named the slightest degree of healing power.

XII

Teaching by Parables

THAT Jesus was a highly skillful teacher there is ample evidence. To emphasize his teachings he often used the figure of speech known as *parable*, a short allegory, wherein a deep spiritual truth was conveyed to those having ears to hear; that is, to those having some measure of spiritual understanding. While this method of teaching was common at that time, Jesus differed from other teachers in that he did not personalize impersonal objects. In pagan fables and even in parts of the Old Testament, objects, such as trees and animals, were made to speak. But Jesus did not use that type of parable to illustrate texts from the Old Testament, as did many rabbis and teachers. His use of this potent figure of speech was for the purpose of driving home some important truth, since the Oriental mentality was accustomed to this type of teaching rather than to a direct method.

Jesus drew many of his parables and allegories from nature and from the experience of the people about him. He drew important lessons from the husbandry of the times, from the shepherd, and from the farmer. The thirteenth chapter of Matthew, often termed the "parable chapter," is replete with this method of imparting knowledge. And this method was, by his own explanation, adopted because it would be understood by those who were spiritually prepared to receive the lesson he wished to convey. On the other hand, those unprepared, the gross and materially minded, would scarcely profit by

the teaching. At least, they could not profit by what they did not understand or receive.

Jesus draws one impressive parable from the familiar figure of the sower, the husbandman, planting his crops. Some of the seed fell beside the road, an unfavorable place for its development. Some fell on stony places, where there was scarcely enough earth to give it a hold. Because of the impossibility of its taking firm root, the only result would be that its young shoots would soon dry up under the sun's hot rays. Other seed fell among thorns, which, being hardier, soon so choked the sprouts of the good seed that they ceased to grow. But some seed found good soil, favorable conditions, and grew luxuriantly, bringing forth an abundant crop.

In this thirteenth chapter of Matthew, Jesus applied his use of parable especially to impress upon his hearers some degree of understanding of the Kingdom of Heaven. To the man who sowed good seed in his field he compared the Kingdom of Heaven. But all was not well with the crop, for, while the husbandman slept, came an enemy who sowed tares (weeds), and in time these grew up and choked the wheat. Thereupon, when the servants inquired of their master how this happened, for he had sowed only good seed in his field, he replied that an enemy had done it. But when the proposal was made that the tares be pulled up, he replied that in removing the tares the good grain might be injured. Both were to grow until the harvest, when the good grain would be put in the barn, while the tares would be burned.

Here is perfectly illustrated the Master's use of parable in conveying an important lesson. The good seed is spiritual truth, the truth about God, His Christ, and man. When truth is received into human consciousness (the

carnal mind), there are uncovered by the spiritual facts many false beliefs, many material claims. The complete elimination of these falsities would be followed by the disappearance of the physical body, since this body is but objectified material belief. The mental state, termed the "carnal mind," is transformed as spiritual truth enters, until it finally disappears and man's true selfhood appears.

This transitory state of material and spiritual existence is termed "human experience." It is a mental state wherein material beliefs have some part. In proportion as these material beliefs give place to the advancing Christ, the material disappears and man in God's likeness becomes manifest. Then is man's true abiding place found to be the Kingdom of God, wherein is no material element, but only wholly harmonious spiritual consciousness.

It is readily apparent that such teaching, spiritually metaphysical, could scarcely be understood unless there had been developed some degree of spiritual sense, the ability to grasp the spiritual facts of the universe. The same reasoning applies to the grain of mustard seed, the least of all seeds; that is, the least of spiritual ideas, which under the beneficent influence of Christ, Truth, grows into a mighty tree, a state of consciousness in which is no element of error, but in which truth is present.

There is also the parable of the leaven hid in three measures of meal, three states of human consciousness. In each the leaven of spiritual truth, under divine impulsion, would work its transformation until all error was reduced to its primitive state of nothingness.

Still persisting in his effort to convey an adequate concept of the Kingdom of Heaven, Jesus approaches it from another angle. It is like a treasure, some precious thing, gold or pearls, hid in a field: the Christ, Truth, resident in a material mentality. But when its value is

seen, that it is eternal truth, the way of salvation, the open gate to eternal life, the one who thus envisions it will give up everything—all material beliefs—in order to possess this priceless treasure. The merchant who finds this peace, the state of consciousness in which no evil, no materiality abides, will exchange all his goods, his material beliefs, for the priceless pearl.

Again changing his metaphor, Jesus presses home his purpose. The fisherman draws his net, examines its contents, casts out the worthless, the false material beliefs but saves the good, that which is of value. And the spiritually minded know that which is valueless, the temporal, and that which is priceless, the eternal. And he likened the scribe who sought this Kingdom of Heaven to the householder who examined his goods in order to distinguish between what was new, spiritual truth, and what was old, the long-held material beliefs.

One of the most appealing parables presented by Jesus is that of the Good Shepherd, comparable in its beauty only to the parable of the Prodigal Son. To gain the deep significance of Jesus' use of the shepherd and his sheep to teach one of his most valuable lessons, one should know something of the method of sheep husbandry in Palestine and the Near East. There the relation of the shepherd to his flock is something charming to behold the true significance of which is so appealingly set forth in the incomparable Twenty-third Psalm. The shepherd is the friend of the sheep, their protector from evil from all danger. He is also their provider, for he must find for them green pasture and pure water. He looks after their ills—he literally anoints their heads with oil when they seem to need this ministry.

I shall long remember seeing the shepherds of Palestine with their flocks, as we drove about that rough but fascinating country. Especially do I recall the shepherds

who daily led his flock to the gently sloping sides of Mt. Scopus for the good feed there. At noontime he took them to the stream, the brook Cedron, which winds down the valley, from the pure waters of which they could plentifully slake their thirst. Then as the shades of night fell, from my window I could see him gather them together, not more than half a hundred, no doubt calling each by name, and quietly lead them to a cave in the hillside.

This is a country of limestone, and caves are numerous, furnishing not only shelter for the flocks, but for human beings as well. The sheep safely inside, the shepherd blocked the entrance to the cave with the square tin cans in which the East is supplied with oil for their lamps. And thus, safely folded, he went to his own humble abode, perhaps another cave in the hillside, for the night.

The flocks are small in number, and each sheep knows and responds to its name. They are never driven, but gently led by the shepherd. There is no shouting, no violence, no chasing by dogs, but the quiet, peaceful, gentle relation of a devoted friend to his sheep. He loves each member of his flock, and exhibits keen solicitude for its welfare. Knowledge of the habits of the Eastern shepherd greatly illumines the deep spiritual meaning of the parable of the Good Shepherd.

As recorded in John's Gospel, it reads: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep . . . the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not

what things they were which he spake unto them.”¹

Beautiful as is the form of this parable, its significance far outweighs its literary excellence. The sheepfold is spiritual consciousness, the Kingdom of Heaven. The Good Shepherd is the Christ, Truth; the door, the entrance, righteous prayer, that is, desire pure and holy, the only means whereby one enters the fold. This door opens to the Way of Life, the Christ-way, whereby is gained that state of consciousness which is permanent and perfect, which is eternal Life. This way is straight and narrow, that is, from the standpoint of material sense, for only as a false state of consciousness is laid aside is entrance gained. This is the way “that leadeth unto life.”²

The thief and robber is he who tries to enter the fold through false pretenses. That one who strives to possess something to which he is not entitled is the thief and robber. It is the mortal, or carnal mind, assuming to possess divine rights to which it has no claim. It would assert its ownership of that which it has not demonstrated. No evil can enter the Kingdom. No phase of material belief can gain entrance to spiritual blessedness. He who enters by the door is the Shepherd of the sheep. He whose vision is spiritual, who is manifesting the Christ, therefore, becomes a follower of the Good Shepherd, the Leader, of those who have less or little spiritual sight, but who are desirous of following in the way.

“And the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And . . . he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.”³ This, again, is the picture of the Good Shepherd, the Christ, Truth, leading, not driving, those who are known by him to be desirous of finding

¹ John 10:1 ff.

² Matthew 7:14.

³ John 10:2 ff.

the Way of Life and are willing to follow. Obedience, humility, and love of good are thus exemplified by the quiet flock.

The Shepherd knows his own and leads his flock by the law of Love. The false shepherd, the robber, would take them away to harass and destroy. The carnal mind, the bad shepherd, has no element of good. Moreover, Jesus declared, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him."⁴ Did not this Christ, this Good Shepherd, declare, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me"?⁵ No urging, no driving, no forcing, but the call of Love, a Love the significance of which, of its breadth and compassion, of its height and depth, the world as yet has scarcely caught a glimpse. It is, indeed, the Love manifested as the Good Shepherd, the Love that gives all and asks nothing in return, the Love which is God, the irresistible, irrepressible, fervent desire to bless.

"This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep."⁶ Manifestly, the Master here refers to his spiritual selfhood, his Christ-self, as it were. This Christ, as we have seen, is the door through which all must pass to gain the divine Presence, the spiritual consciousness, which knows only the things of Life and Love. The voice of this Good Shepherd is, indeed, the voice of Truth calling—calling to the sheep to enter the fold, God's Kingdom, there to abide forever in holiness and true blessedness.

John follows this precious passage with other words of Jesus, quite unlike the tender compassion of the para-

⁴ John 6:44.

⁵ John 12:32.

⁶ John 10:6 ff.

ble. "All that ever came before me," he cried, "are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them."⁷ This passage has been regarded by unbelievers as a most egotistical statement on the part of the Nazarene. All who had gone before were thieves and robbers! Is it not justifiable to believe that Jesus was not referring to the holy men of olden time, to Abraham, Moses, Isaac, and the host who had grasped the idea of one God and held to that concept, although, until clarified by Jesus, it was not a true concept of God? It seems clear that he refers to false teachers who have undertaken to lead the sheep into dangerous places, to possess them for their own pleasures and satisfaction. These are thieves and robbers, indeed, and they entice but to kill. Let us not forget that mortal mind, so-called, is often dishonest, frequently malicious, yes, even murderous, utterly devoid of any desire to heal and bless. What a contrast to the loving Christ, the good, the perfect Shepherd, whose irresistible and irrepressible desire is to bless and happyify! We are assured that the sheep, those who know the voice of the true Shepherd, would never hear or obey false leaders.

There follows, from the lips of him "who spake as never man spake before,"⁸ another passage of profoundest significance to humanity. Continuing the parable, Jesus says, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."⁹ How accurately does this most incisive of all metaphysicians analyze and characterize the carnal mind—selfish, malicious, thieving! It has no good purpose, is never actuated by a noble desire; it creates but to

⁷ John 10:8.

⁸ John 7:46.

⁹ John 10:10.

harass and destroy. What a contrast to the Good Shepherd, whose sole purpose is to give life, and life more abundantly—that life, or state of consciousness, which knows no lack, or inharmony, an eternal state of blessedness in which abides man, the divine idea, in the consciousness of perfect bliss.

The Greek word which Jesus used here for life is *Zoe*, meaning spiritual life, life which is eternal, and in which is no imperfection. His use of words was extraordinarily accurate. In John 12:25, we read, "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." Here in the first two instances, where the human or material sense of life is meant, the Greek word is *psuxē*, from which we derive our word *psyche*; while in the last instance, where life eternal is signified, the Greek word is *Zoe*. The Greek language presents many delicate shades of meaning quite impossible to express in English.

Again we read: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth [that is, layeth down] his life for the sheep."¹⁰ Where the hireling flees upon the approach of danger, the Good Shepherd stands by his post, even giving up his human sense of life for the benefit of the sheep, those who would profit from his sacrifice. It is sad to contemplate that in his hour of great need, on that night in the Garden when the forces of evil came to destroy Jesus, the disciples deserted him, so that when he was haled before the Sanhedrin and Pilate, not one follower was there to protest his innocence. But Jesus proved his words. He was willing to, and did, lay down his human sense of life for the privilege of overcoming their false human sense of life and death, triumphantly demonstrating that Life, the real life, *Zoe*, is eternal.

¹⁰ John 10:11.

No shepherd could do more than he, most faithful of all shepherds, who even suffered crucifixion for his sheep.

Thus did Jesus teach, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah. Those who, having eyes and ears, yet were without spiritual sense, could neither hear nor receive the precious pearls of spiritual truth, the very key to the Kingdom of Heaven and eternal Life which he was placing before them.

Jesus' ability to read the mortal or carnal mind enabled him to determine quickly those who were prepared to receive and profit by his teaching. To place truth before those unready to receive it, he compared to the casting of pearls before swine, the material, mental state, unleavened by spiritual truth.

As has been shown, Jesus conveyed many of his most vital teachings through parable. The Good Shepherd, the Prodigal Son, the Good Samaritan, the Unjust Steward, and many other potent illustrations drove home his message. In this method and purpose he was quite unlike the rabbis of his time. Although he was often termed *rabbi*, teacher, his approach to his purpose and his methods were quite unlike the other teachers. Knowing the potency of concrete example, he adopted the parabolic method. They, on the other hand, taught in generalities, and he buttressed his words by demonstration, proving that his teachings were eminently practical as the Way of Life. This made him the most successful of teachers and accounts in no small measure for his great following.

It has been well said that "his teaching healed and his healing taught."¹¹ Much discussion has arisen over the relative importance of his healing works as compared with his teachings. None can gainsay that the teacher

¹¹ Anthony Deane, *Jesus Christ*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, Ltd., 1934, p. 81.

who is able to prove the truthfulness of his statements in actual experience is the most potent instructor. What would be said of the mathematician who announced general truths but made no application of them, who failed to prove their practicability by solving problems in the presence of his pupils? Jesus ran no such risk. He knew the value of demonstration. In the face of his many works of great variety there was no chance whatsoever for denial or refusal to accept his position as Messiah, as the Christ, spiritually endowed above all who had preceded him.

Jesus did not deny or abrogate the Law or the Prophets. Rather did he amplify the Law through new interpretations and made it practical through teaching his followers, both the Twelve and the Seventy, how they could do likewise. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,"¹² "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give,"¹³ are significant words for those who accept the Nazarene as Saviour and Way-Shower, as Lord and Master.

The position often held that this healing dispensation was only for a given period scarcely holds if one accepts the Gospel message as the Way of Life as the key to the Kingdom. That this phase of Christian ministry is so lightly held by the Christian Church may in no small measure account for the failure of the Church to so evangelize humanity as to make impossible the condition of chaos and barbarism in which the world now finds itself. There is a cause for the present situation, though buried deep under the blanket of intellectualism. The simple teachings of the Master have become so crystalized in dogma and ritualism, in formalism and symbol-

¹² Mark 16:15.

¹³ Matthew 10:8.

ism, and consequently, as applied, have lost so much of their practical potency, that one need seek no further for the cause of the present chaotic condition of the world. But the same truth which the Nazarene taught and practiced nineteen centuries ago is as available and as potent as when he trod the hills and vales of Galilee. A perversion of those teachings has persisted in scholastic theology. Their primal simplicity has disappeared. Doctrine has become involved and obscure.

The great need of Christendom is a return to the teachings of the Master as they fell from his lips. And the message is to be taken as a whole, not divided. There has been a definite refusal to accept the undivided garment, perhaps because the demands of true discipleship have been too great, the price for salvation too high.

Jesus revealed the truth about the Kingdom in order that the people might prepare themselves to enter therein. And he did this through interpreting God to mortals, making known to them the nature of Deity and how that knowledge could be practically applied to solve the problems of humanity. And he made no exception to the types of error that spiritual truth would correct through their destruction. No phase of false belief could withstand the omnipotence of God, infinite good.

XIII

Teaching of Jesus Regarding Life

THE Gospel teaching, both implicit and explicit, makes clear that God is Life, the only self-existent Being; that He is the Cause and Source of all existence, the eternal One, who was and is and ever will be, the infinite Father of all, supreme, and existent without material accompaniments. There is no life apart from God, that is, no existence but God and His expression or manifestation. John saw the Christ as the expression of this divine Life, and through his consciousness of this supreme fact he showed the way whereby mortals could attain that life which is permanent and perfect; in other words, how mortals could attain to man's true selfhood as the children of God. Hence John could declare that in him, that is, in the Christ, was Life, God expressed; and this Life was the light to illumine human consciousness and quicken it into eternal Life: and this Life was the true expression of God, infinite Life.

Jesus drew a sharp distinction between this perfect Life and the material sense of life generally held by mortals. The abundant Life, which he declared that he came to reveal to poor humanity, was the unfolding sense of existence which follows upon progressive understanding of what Life really is, and of man's relation to the infinite Source of his being. Of necessity, as this understanding grows, consciousness expands, becoming increasingly aware of the Life which is God.

That this Life is permanent, perfect, eternal, was a cardinal point in the teaching of the Master: "And this

is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”¹ Words could scarcely be more explicit. Knowledge of God, understanding of Him as infinite Life, and of the Christ, God’s manifestation to mortals, leads to the gaining of eternal Life, forever existence, which is the native and permanent state of God’s children.

The evangelist in the first Epistle again expresses the same idea. “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”² And John further declares that he has written these things to assure all that they have eternal Life, to be gained by accepting the Christ, sent of God, exponent of life everlasting.

To mortals, then, is shown the way to gain eternal Life, to lay hold of the precious truth that man is immortal; and the consciousness of this sublime fact is a present possibility. How? By turning away from the material sense of life, of life and intelligence in matter, to lay hold, through spiritualizing consciousness, of the fact that eternal Life is now the true status of man, of all the children of God. Surely this is what the evangelist meant when he wrote those precious words, “Now are we the sons of God.”³ By no logic could poor humanity, with its multiplicity of erroneous beliefs which burden it, be the sons of God. His image and likeness, the likeness of infinite Spirit, must of necessity be spiritual, and Spirit is wholly unlike matter. The “sons of God,” the expression of eternal Life, are the true men and women, the forever children of the infinite Father-Mother God.

¹ John 17:3.

² I John 5:11-12.

³ I John 3:2.

When Jesus declared, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live,"⁴ he established forever the fact both of eternal Life and the method by which mortals could attain to this priceless possession. It is the living Christ, the unchanging Truth, that resurrects thought, lifts it out of its materiality into the atmosphere of Mind, where all eternally exist. It was this state of consciousness that took Jesus out of the tomb and enabled him to present the same material body, still bearing the marks of the crucifixion. It was this ascending thought, consciousness losing all sense of materiality, which lifted him above the material sense of body, until he was no longer apparent in a human form. The Christ had prevailed over the material senses. He was forever with the Father, whose emanation the Christ forever is.

The resurrection experience is a present possibility to all mankind. Belief in understanding of the Christ, as the Son of God, expressing Life without beginning and without end, lifts thought out of its material basis into the atmosphere of true Life, the Life that is God. Even though a mortal is buried in sensuality and sin, even though he is thoroughly immersed in matter, his turning to the one God, the Father of all, and laying hold of the facts of Being, lifts his consciousness into the realm of Spirit, of Life, where is no death. Death is a belief pertaining to the falsity that man is material, when the fact is that man is, always has been, and always will be spiritual.

Jesus showed to mortals the way to eternal life even for those dead in trespasses and sins. Every mortal is destined to follow the course laid out by Jesus, for he is indeed the Saviour to all mankind. He showed the way;

⁴ John 11:25.

each individual must walk in it. Each mortal is the promoter of his own resurrection. And it is inevitable that every mortal shall make the journey out of the belief of death into the full understanding that God is man's life. If this were not true, why did Jesus admonish his hearers, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, nor what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"⁵

Preservation of the material sense of life was not the chief import of the Master's teaching. With the true sense of Life—that Life is God—food, drink, and clothing are of less consequence, since their only purpose is to support the material or false sense of life. As the spiritual sense is acquired, every phase of materiality is lessened in importance. How cleverly did Jesus set forth the fundamental fact that the true life is attained only as the false is surrendered! "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."⁶ What on the surface seems paradoxical becomes perfect logic when examined in the light of his teaching regarding life. None can gain the spiritual sense of Life while holding to the material as real, as the true sense of Life. Only as the false is laid down can the true be gained. Spirit and matter being wholly antithetical, they cannot be reconciled. There is no common ground for these extremes.

Jesus carried this most important subject even a step further. In fact, his elucidation is so complete that no phase of the subject is neglected. The experience of death is not necessary to mortals. "Whosoever . . . believeth in me shall never die."⁷ Here was, perhaps, the most arresting statement Jesus ever made regarding

⁵ Matthew 6:25.

⁶ Matthew 10:39.

⁷ John 11:26.

the experience termed death, the experience most universally dreaded. That escape from this experience is possible here and now is the purport of this declaration, else words become meaningless. Believing on, that is, understanding the Christ, the truth about God, man, and the universe, lifts consciousness above the belief of life in matter, material existence, into the realm of reality, where man's real selfhood eternally abides.

This change of consciousness is a present possibility. Enoch and Elijah, by the Bible records, were translated, that is, were lifted out of the belief that life is born into matter, is supported by it, and dies out of it in order to gain the state of consciousness termed the Kingdom of Heaven.

Those who truly accept Christ Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, as Lord and Saviour, find in his precious precepts the complete compendium for righteous living. There is no phase of human experience to which his words are not applicable, no problem to which he has not offered the perfect solution. However, success in gaining the blessings which he reveals is dependent upon full and willing obedience. No halfhearted submission will win. Understanding is the gateway to Life and all the blessings a willing Father bestows upon His offspring.

One of the most impressive and withal one of the most important incidents, related only by John, is the story of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. The narrative is very direct, even dramatic in its brevity, and vivid in its expression. It is of special importance to the followers of the Nazarene, for two reasons, both highly significant. First in importance is the absolute possibility, even practicability, of raising the so-called dead. It also reveals the intimate friendship between Jesus, "the man of sorrows," and this family of three—Lazarus and his two

sisters, Martha and Mary. It clearly indicates that Jesus knew and loved human companionship, that he sought and prized friendly intercourse with those who loved him and trusted him. And we are quite justified in the conclusion that in these times of friendly and intimate relationship, he disclosed to his friends much of his conviction regarding God and His Christ, of his own character, mission, and destiny.

How highly should a record of these meetings be prized when, apart from the public gaze, he settled down in this friendly home in Bethany, relaxed and quiet, telling, perhaps, of the glory of Him whom he called "my Father!" Over the shoulder of Olivet, the gently sloping hill which overlooks Jerusalem, a well-worn path winds down to Bethany, which we love to believe he frequently trod, when on the way to the home of his friends.

The beginning of the story is abrupt. "Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha."⁸ The portrayal of these widely unlike sisters, as depicted in this story, is a fascinating one. They lived quietly in the little village of Bethany, in a stone house sitting beside the road that ran and still runs from Jerusalem to Jericho. It is generally believed that Jesus frequented this home whenever opportunity offered and that he abode there during his last week in Jerusalem.

The sisters, so unlike in outlook and character, were quite like sisters of today—people we know. Mary, spiritually minded, was quickly receptive to the priceless truths which Jesus had spoken in the intimacy of their home. Her quick intuitive sense must have brought to this lonely man a deep sense of affection, based upon the

⁸ John 11:1.

quality of spiritual understanding which is the foundation of all true friendship. These two, Mary and Jesus, were spiritually near. An illuminating picture of Mary is found at the very beginning of this dramatic story: "It was that Mary," we read, "which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick."⁹ The reference recorded is to the story, in Matthew, of the Mary who came to Jesus when he was at dinner with Simon, the leper, and worshiped and served him in this strictly Oriental manner.

Martha, on the other hand, honest, faithful, kind to a degree, solicitous for his physical welfare, yet lacking that keenness of intuition which readily grasps spiritual truths, was more engrossed in the material side of life. She it was who looked after the human needs of the Master when he came as a welcome guest to their home. It was Martha who prepared the meals, who perhaps washed his feet, as was the Eastern custom with the newly arrived guest, who looked after his comfort with the devotion which characterizes the good housekeeper, the loving friend.

Martha represents those who serve God by serving mankind in some useful manner; Mary, those who serve through spiritual ministry—both necessary in the human economy. Of Lazarus we know only what we may infer as to one whose sisters were so fine—a member of a family in whose midst Jesus found rest, understanding, sympathy, and solace.

The news of Lazarus's sickness, it appears, reached Jesus while he was sojourning somewhere to the east of Jordan. The message that came, "He whom thou lovest is sick,"¹⁰ affords at least a glimpse of the relation of Jesus to the family. Now Jesus did not go at once to

⁹ John 11:2.

¹⁰ John 11:3 ff.

his friend whom he loved. In reply to the message, he said to his disciples, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." These words were spoken not from a sense of egotism on the part of Jesus, but rather to proclaim that, through his true selfhood, the Christ, Son of God, the glory of God would be made manifest in destroying the belief termed death.

Jesus lingered two days, and, when he journeyed again toward Judea, he said, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep."¹¹ Not understanding Jesus' words, the disciples said, "If he sleep, he shall do well." But Jesus then declared plainly, "Lazarus is dead." Let us not infer from this that Jesus believed in death as a reality, that is, an experience of spiritual man; but he spoke in terms common to humanity, terms that his hearers could understand. The question may be raised, Why did not Jesus heal his friend from the place where he was, that is, absently, as in the case of the nobleman's son whom he healed when at Cana? The answer is obvious. He wished to make use of the event as an occasion for the higher demonstration. He had healed many—the multitude. He had already raised the dead, but only those who had recently passed through that experience. Now he was to raise from death one who had died some time before.

Martha, hearing that Jesus was coming to them, went to meet him; but Mary sat in the house, a situation that well illustrates the divergent mental attitudes of the two sisters. Mary abode in perfect faith that all was well. Martha, hastening out to meet the dear friend in whom she had great faith, the faith, however, that is in a degree blind, accosts her friend: "Lord, if thou hadst been here,

¹¹ John 11:11 ff.

my brother had not died.”¹² These words, spoken out of a deep sense of grief, seem to convey a reproach—had Jesus not delayed, Lazarus would have been healed.

But Martha adds, “But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.” Her words signify a degree of faith in Jesus’ ability to restore her brother, a faith engendered, no doubt, by the works which she had herself witnessed, works done by this marvelous friend so extraordinary that she was hopeful that he could even restore her brother from death. Jesus replied, “Thy brother shall rise again.” And Martha said unto him, “I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” This would seem to deny the faith manifested in her former statement, a vacillation due, perhaps, to her great grief.

In reply to her apparent resignation to separation from her brother until the judgment day, Jesus made one of the most sublime statements he ever uttered, a statement which at once fills us with awe and the deepest reverence, with gratitude and expectancy, with a deep-seated peace and consolation.

John writes: “Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?”¹³ Out of his sure knowledge of life as indestructible, he uttered these words. The Christ, the divine idea, which constitutes man’s real selfhood, lives forever. And Jesus knew that what was true of him was true likewise of Lazarus, and is true now of all God’s children. In the understanding of God as Life and man as His expression, may not all declare, “I (that is, my true selfhood) am the resurrection and the life”? And assuredly, whoever gains the true

¹² John 11:21 ff.

¹³ John 11:25.

sense of life will raise from their false sense of death those who seem to have accepted this experience as an actuality.

Mary joins them and repeats Martha's words of faith. Prostrate at the feet of Jesus, she cries, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."¹⁴ It is a sad scene, so touching that Jesus wept. It is interesting that the Greek verb translated "wept" means, literally, "shed tears," while in the case of Martha and Mary the verb signifies "wept," that is, lamented. Martha declares that the body of her brother is disintegrating. Jesus' reply, beautiful and calm, while gentle, yet is touched with remonstrance, "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?"¹⁵

Then, the stone removed, "Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me."¹⁶ No words could more definitely express Jesus' consciousness of life as eternal and indestructible, as perfect and permanent. He knew God was present and that God is Life. Hence there could be no death. This was the prayer of full faith, the prayer which he had before assured his disciples would be certain of answer. Nothing could more perfectly illustrate his sense of man's oneness with the Father.

Thus prepared, Jesus cried, "Lazarus, come forth! And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes. . . . Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go." Not alone relieve him of these wrappings, but remove from him all sense of death. See him as never having died, but forever expressing that continuity of Being which is eternal Life.

¹⁴ John 11:32.

¹⁵ John 11:40.

¹⁶ John 11:41 ff.

It is little wonder that many who beheld this event were convinced that at last the Messiah had come. And it seems that some of them, understanding the deep significance of the incident, hastened to carry the news to the Pharisees. We read that later many came to see this man who had been restored to life after having passed through the experience of death.

XIV

True Substance and False

AMONG many conditions touched upon by Jesus, conditions which make for right living and entrance to the Kingdom, is the problem of the possession of worldly goods, of wealth in its generally accepted significance. How should riches be regarded, and what use should be made of them? An outstanding illustration of this problem is found in the tenth chapter of Mark's Gospel. As Jesus was traveling one day, a rich young man of social prominence came to him to inquire how he could gain eternal life, that is, the assurance of the continuity of his individual identity. His salutation, "Good Master," immediately met a rebuke from the ever alert Nazarene. "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God."¹ Quickly did he thus deny the implication that he of himself was the source of, or personally possessed of "good." There was but one source for all good, and that was the infinite Father in Heaven.

Jesus was ever ready to deny personal capability or commendable qualities which originated in him or which were possessed by him alone. The common Father had endowed all His children with the same qualities which he expressed, but manifested only because of their divine origin.

Jesus proceeded to tell the rich young man what to do in order to gain that which he sought, assurance of eternal life. He must keep the Commandments, which the

¹ Mark 10:18.

Master recited to him. The answer came that he had kept those Commandments all his life. He had been an exemplary disciple of Judaism, a righteous young man. But this was not sufficient. With his keen intuitive sense, coupled with the ability to read the carnal mind, Jesus saw exactly what was keeping the young man from the Kingdom. He was holding to a false sense of substance, to the belief that his riches, his lands and flocks and personal possessions, constituted true substance. Quickly did the Master point the remedy. "Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me." ²

But the young man was not prepared to part with that which he had so long possessed, and which he not only regarded as substance but which had given him prestige and a type of power among his fellows. He was not ready to surrender his earthly possessions, even to exchange material wealth for the heavenly treasure which constitutes eternal life, precisely what he sought. And he turned away sorrowful, unready to make what seemed to him a great sacrifice—parting with his possessions. Jesus remarked that it was very hard for those possessed of material riches to enter the Kingdom. And he even emphasized his remarks by a most conclusive metaphor, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." ³

The problem of the camel and the needle's eye, which has long puzzled commentators, finds a practical explanation by a Syrian scholar,⁴ who explains that the Aramaic word translated "camel" also signifies "rope," a meaning which clarifies the application of the figure. And in

² Mark 10:21.

³ Mark 10:25.

⁴ The Reverend George M. Lamsa.

support of this translation it is asserted that today in certain villages in Syria, where the Aramaic language is still spoken, a woman, having trouble in passing the thread through her needle, exclaims, "This thread is like a rope."

The words of Jesus spoken to this young ruler contain a depth of meaning which manifestly his interrogator did not catch. "Sell all your wealth, give to the poor, and have treasure in heaven." That is to say, earthly riches cannot be taken into heaven, the Kingdom of God. No more can that type of mentality which holds material riches as true substance possess the Kingdom. Only spiritualized consciousness, that which knows only Spirit as substance, can enter the Kingdom. The young man, very rich, had not attained to this degree of understanding. Hence his sorrow.

Furthermore, Jesus' instructions contained another most important condition. "Come . . . and follow me."⁵ Having divested himself of his wealth as preliminary to entrance upon the Kingdom, he would then become a follower, not of a human personality, but of the Christ, the Truth, which Jesus so perfectly manifested. How complete and withal how definite were these instructions, which are as practical and as important in this age as when uttered in that far-off day! Only as the true sense of substance is gained is the treasure in heaven possessed. For by no means may wealth, material riches, or the false sense of treasure be taken into the Kingdom of Spirit.

This teaching, be it noted, does not by any means condemn wealth—riches as such. But when material things of whatsoever nature are regarded as true substance, and are given first place in one's purpose, then, and then only, do riches become a barrier to the gaining and possession of true riches, the heavenly treasure.

⁵ Mark 10:21.

Precisely the same import is set forth by Jesus in instructing his disciples to beware of covetousness. When the ground of the rich man brought forth bountiful crops beyond the capacity of his barns, he proposed to build others, large enough to shelter all his crops. Then he would pride himself upon the fact that he had enough to last him for many years, and in consequence could pass his time in sensuous pleasure, eating, drinking, and making merry. But he thought not of what might happen, should he pass from his then state of consciousness, that is, if his "soul" should be required of him. And Jesus cited this as an illustration of the result when one accumulates wealth to be expended for one's own sensuous pleasure "and is not rich toward God."

On the same occasion Jesus amplified his instruction as to the result of laying up of personal wealth and depending upon it for support and protection, rather than upon God. Dramatically did he emphasize the necessity for developing that faith in God based upon understanding, which, when once gained, protects and provides the necessary things. No teaching of the Master is more definite, more practical, or more important. For it not only posits the way to the Kingdom, but in equally explicit terms it defines the things that completely block the way. People are not to fear, for God in His infinite Love for His children has already provided every needful thing. Nothing is lacking in the heavenly Kingdom. And this understanding, clearly gained and firmly held, inevitably brings whatever is required to make life harmonious and happy on the plane of human experience.

Earthly riches are fleeting. They often disappear, as it were, overnight. What one may look upon as ample to supply human needs during a lifetime vanishes as the day. But the heavenly riches, the understanding of true substance, is a permanent possession which neither rust

nor moth may destroy. It has been truly said that what men most earnestly seek, that to them is true substance. Jesus expressed it perfectly. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."⁶

In a cogent epistle to Timothy, his "son," Paul appealingly interprets the Master's teaching upon the same subject. As we brought nothing of material riches into this world, so we take nothing out. And he describes the evil that may befall the possession of riches, when wrongly held and wrongly used. They "drown men in destruction and perdition."⁷ And the Apostle follows with a saying as pungent as it is brief, "For the love of money is the root of all evil."⁸ Not in money *per se*, but in the love of it, lies the danger. Here the whole problem is seen purely as a mental state. Not wealth, not money, but the mental attitude regarding it constitutes the danger. When the right attitude toward riches is gained, they become a blessing both to the possessor and to those upon whom they may be bestowed. Wrongly held, riches shut tight the gate to the Kingdom; for where your treasure is, there is your heart, there is centered the purpose and trend of one's life. God and mammon cannot be served at the same time, and the choice is individual; but the results are as far apart as heaven and hell.

Jesus by no means exalted poverty, but he assuredly taught that dependence upon God, not blind faith without understanding, but the faith sprung from knowledge of the Father and the inevitable love for Him which understanding implies, inevitably makes for harmonious and happy living. Life lived unselfishly, loving one's neighbors as oneself, through the recognition that the

⁶ Matthew 6:21.

⁷ I Timothy 6:9.

⁸ I Timothy 6:10.

real man, God's likeness, is the image of Love, therefore always lovable, is the way marked out by the greatest of all Teachers—by him whose love for humanity was so great that his teachings were his rule and guide of life, not merely sophistries uttered for personal satisfaction. They were messages from on High, sent for the redemption of mankind.

Another parable used by Jesus in defining true riches is found in the story of Dives and Lazarus, related by Luke. Two extremes are dramatically drawn, the one of abject poverty, a beggar named Lazarus, diseased, lying at the gate of the other, a rich man clothed in purple and fine linen and living after the manner of rich men. The beggar received only the crumbs which fell from the master's table. In course of time both died; the poor man was received into Abraham's bosom. In "Abraham's bosom" did Jesus personalize the divine protection and cherishing love which God forever bestows upon His children. It was held to be the highest region of Sheol, the underworld. The lesson is strengthened by this type of metaphor. The rich man, in the torment that constitutes hell, the lowest region of Sheol, beholds the beggar reposing peacefully in Abraham's bosom and asks aid of Abraham, that Lazarus be sent to quench his terrible thirst. Abraham replies by reference to the former conditions of the two, riches and abject poverty; but now the beggar is in comfort while the rich man suffers. There is, in consequence, a great gulf between them which may not be bridged, a chasm over which they may not pass, one to the other.

Then the rich man, although seeing his own hopeless state, yet had regard for his brothers whom he would save from a similar fate. Send Lazarus to my father's house, the home of five brothers, to warn them, he pleads. Abraham's assurance is that, being Jews, the brothers

have Moses and his Law, and also the Prophets. Thus their safety is assured. Not satisfied, the rich man, recalling that he too had these same teachings, yet had disregarded them, pleaded that if one should go who had died, his testimony would correct the wrong. But Abraham was obdurate. If they are not prepared to hear Moses and the Prophets, to accept their teachings as the Way of Life, no more would they accept the testimony of one who had risen from the dead.

The method of this parable is more mystical than are Jesus' teachings as a rule. Yet the message is unmistakable. The rich man, holding to a false sense of substance, suffers until his thought is transformed. Not poverty but a better sense of true substance, the substance of Life which is God, took the beggar into heaven.

The teachings of Jesus by no means advocate a condition of lack as man's true status. The fact that he had no home after entering upon his ministry does not imply that a homeless condition was the ideal for society. Far from it! Rather does it imply that he was willing to become a wanderer, housed only by the charity of his friends, that he might carry on his purpose most effectually. Jesus was not an ascetic, despising the amenities of life. But he was bent upon the successful performance of his great service to humanity, to show the way to the Kingdom. In this ministry, to be unencumbered by home or property was to his advantage. He did not invariably seek out the poorest and humblest. Frequently he accepted the hospitality of the rich, even though such experience called out from those who hated him the characterization "glutton and winebibber."⁹ He knew that men pursued the accumulation of wealth to their own enslavement. It was to point the inevi-

⁹ Matthew 11:19.

table results of such pursuit that he drew his arresting parables.

In the Jewish concept, the heart was the seat of intelligence and life, as it often is today. *Soul* is often used with the same significance, that is, as the individual, material life, intelligence, and thought. An interpretation of the distress signal, "SOS," sent out by a ship in need, as "Save our souls," has the same connotation. It has no reference to Soul as God, as Life, permanent and indestructible. If the thought, the life of men, be directed to the accumulation of wealth, to material gain, there is no purpose or desire to lay hold of the true sense of Life, of real substance. The former precludes the latter.

On the other hand, the man who is earnestly seeking the Kingdom does it through righteous service, and that service, since it serves God, brings the reward in material things. For that all these things will be added was the definite promise. When one's highest purpose is to serve God, material things will fall into their rightful place in one's mental economy. Wealth righteously acquired and righteously utilized may become a means of gaining the Kingdom. The mammon of unrighteousness was the object of Jesus' condemnation.

In the parable of the Unjust Steward, Jesus seems to approve the dishonesty of the servant, who, to make himself popular with his fellows, was willing to cheat his master. Fearful that he was to lose his position because of unprofitable handling of the master's business, he sought to insure his future welfare by winning the friendship of his fellowservants through lessening their indebtedness to the master. Calling his lord's debtors, he reduced the amount each owed the master: one from a hundred measures of oil to fifty; another from a hundred measures of wheat to fourscore, and so on.

The lord, upon learning of this, commended the steward, not the method (for he could scarcely commend bald dishonesty) but the practical wisdom of the man who was clever enough to provide for his future welfare on the plane of his fellows. By way of contrast Jesus even places the wisdom of the children of this world, who will thus provide for themselves, above that of the children of light, that is, of those who are undertaking to gain the Kingdom. Since, however, gain through dishonesty is in reality not gain but loss, the purpose of the parable is plain. Surely, making friends with the "mammon of unrighteousness"¹⁰ could by no means advance one spiritually. Rather does it sink one deeper into the darkness of materialism. And to accept this literally would refute the very crux of Jesus' teaching and mission.

Moreover, the sentiment immediately following in Luke's Gospel perfectly clarifies the situation. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."¹¹ And further, "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" That is to say, faithfulness in that in which you are engaged is necessary to success in that enterprise. If it be the works of mammon, be faithful in those works, for only then will you gain the approval of your lord and the reward you have earned.

If the purpose of this parable be seen to illustrate and emphasize the right use of wealth, its difficulties disappear. If the aim and purpose of life is the acquisition of wealth, moral obliquity and enslavement will inevi-

¹⁰ Luke 16:9.

¹¹ Luke 16:10 ff.

tably follow. But if riches be regarded as a trust, as something of which the owner is the steward, then they may become a means of promoting the present realization of that for which the Lord's Prayer so earnestly petitions. Since the only way to serve God righteously is true service to mankind, riches may be a very potent instrument in that service.

These teachings did not appeal to the covetous Pharisees, who in consequence derided Jesus. Thereupon he described them as seeking to justify themselves before men, that is, to seek popular approval. But God is not mocked. That which is approved by the carnal mind is of necessity condemned of God. Surely no man can serve mammon and gain divine approval thereby.

XV

First and Second Visits to Jerusalem *Cleansing of the Temple*

AFTER his first brief stay in Galilee, during which he had healed many of their ills and preached in the synagogues of the various cities, Jesus went up to Jerusalem, by what route we know not. Immediately important events occurred. On this visit, the first of which there is any record subsequent to his experience with the doctors at the age of twelve, he found conditions that stirred him deeply. His Father's house, the majestic Temple restored by Herod the Great, as recorded by John, was being desecrated by commercialism, by those who bought and sold oxen and sheep and doves. Even money-changers plied their trade within its sacred precincts. Making a scourge of small cords, he drove all the traders, together with their merchandise, from the Temple. He even overturned the tables of the money-changers.

Queried by the Jews as to his authority for doing this, Jesus responded that if they should "destroy this temple"¹ he would raise it up in three days. Believing that Jesus referred to the Temple of worship, they demurred, asking if he could raise up in three days a structure that had taken forty-six years to build. They utterly misunderstood his words, for he referred to his material body and to the fact that when crucified he would raise it up in three days.

¹ John 2:19.

Another brief account of the cleansing of the Temple occurs in Matthew 21. As it seems difficult to determine the relationship, if any, of the two accounts, this incident is dealt with more extensively in a later chapter.

During his stay in Jerusalem, Jesus healed many sick, thereby gaining a great following. He did not then, however, declare himself as to his mission as Messiah, for he knew that the time was not ripe for so important a pronouncement. It was during this period that Nicodemus came to the Master. Apparently attracted by the healing works which he had seen and of which he had heard, this member of the Sanhedrin came by night to ask Jesus if he was really the promised Messiah. The conversation that followed contains words of great moment for humanity, for they deal with the problem of salvation and of Life itself. Its purport was this: Since that which is born of the flesh is material and cannot enter the Kingdom of God, to gain entrance thereto, one needs must be born again, born of the Spirit; that is to say, consciousness must change its basis of belief in matter as substance and through spiritualization gain the facts of Being—understanding of God, of His Christ, of the real universe and man. In this way only, the way of the new birth, does man lay hold of his true selfhood as the son of God.

This was a new point of view to Nicodemus, so strange that he could but exclaim, "How can these things be?"² And the Master reassured him by asserting that he knew to be true that which he had received from on High, from God, infinite intelligence. He referred to the experience which he was to have to assure mortals that by believing on him as Messiah and Way-Shower, they would gain eternal life. Through the operation of

² John 3:9.

divine Law, God had raised up Mary, a woman so spiritually minded as to perceive that God is the Father of all, a concept of fatherhood which enabled her to bear the Christ child. And this Son of God came not to condemn but to save humanity from its self-imposed burdens of sickness and sin. His was a redemptive mission, which, however, necessitated the uncovering of hypocrisy and all manner of evil, the better to destroy it through the process of reformation.

While Jesus and his disciples were in Judea, the Master baptized those who came for this rite. Meantime, John was carrying on his revival near Salim, where water was plentiful. There arose a query among the disciples of John and the Jews as to the method of purifying. When they told John that Jesus was also engaged in baptizing, the doughty John recalled having already told them that he was not the Christ, but was sent before him. "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom . . . rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice."³ And he assured them that the messages from God were true, and of the Father's love for the Son into whose hand He had given all. John's clear vision enabled him to declare that everlasting life was to be gained through believing on the Son; and in the unbelieving the wrath of God abideth.

Jesus now journeyed toward Galilee, and he passed through Samaria, an unusual proceeding in view of the age-old enmity between Samaritan and Jew. It is of more than passing interest that on three occasions, fraught with great moment to mortals, Jesus deals with a Samaritan. On this occasion he revealed to a woman of that race truth of priceless value to humanity. Again, in the parable of the Good Neighbor he made the lead-

³ John 3:29.

ing character a Samaritan. And when he had healed ten lepers, the only one who returned to give thanks was a Samaritan. Jesus thus refused to perpetuate racial hatred. He came to heal and to reform, not to support the enmities of his race.

On the journey northward, wearied by the long road, Jesus waited at the well of Sychar, Jacob's well, under Mount Gerizim, while his followers went into the town for food. Presently a woman of Samaria, following the custom of the day, came out for the supply of water for household use. As he was thirsty, Jesus asked the woman to give him a drink. The woman was surprised that Jesus, a Jew, should ask her, a Samaritan, for the favor even of a drink of water. Seeing an opportunity to convey a needed lesson, he told her if she but knew who it was that made this request of her, she instead would have asked a drink of him, and he would have given her living water. She failed to understand his words, and she saw that he had nothing with which to draw water from the deep well. How, then, could he give her living water? Could he do what even Jacob, who dug the well, could not do—draw water without a vessel? Then Jesus made his words more explicit. Who drinks of water from the well will thirst again. But whoever drinks of the water which he dispenses will never thirst; in fact, it will lead to eternal life. The woman, deeply impressed by the Master's words, asks that she may have this water, that she may never thirst again.

Following an exchange of words as to her marital experiences, she realizes that Jesus is a prophet, a holy man. Then the woman refers to the dissension between Jew and Samaritan, as to their accepted places of worship, the former in Jerusalem, the latter in Mount Gerizim. Jesus, conscious of his Messiahship, declares that salvation

comes from the Jews, and he defines true worship, localized neither in Jerusalem nor upon the near-by mountain. True worship is worship of the Father "in spirit and in truth," ⁴ for God, the Father, seeks such to worship Him. Thereupon Jesus uttered one of the most important sayings ever formulated by human lips; "God is Spirit, and his worshipers must worship him in spirit and in reality." ⁵

God is Spirit. This momentous statement completely dissociates Jesus from adherence to the Jewish Jehovah and to the accepted form of worship. No words could have been more revolutionary. No utterance could be more deeply fraught with meaning. God, the Father, our Father, is not an anthropomorphic being, ruling His universe with the attributes of men; is not a distant sovereign, sitting upon a monarch's throne. God is Spirit, infinite Spirit, ever present, and to be worshiped not by formula, not by dogma, not by sacrifice, but "in spirit and in truth." That is to say, Jesus lifted true worship out of the category of appeasement through material gifts or sacrifices into the realm of thought, a spiritually mental process.

Nothing could have more completely overthrown the foundations of Jewish worship. And yet, this statement, fraught with mightiest significance to mankind, was spoken quietly as the two, the Messiah—Christ Jesus, Son of God—and a humble Samaritan woman, talked together by a well. The setting of this great drama could scarcely have been more appealing, for often the deepest truth is most quietly spoken. Its significance requires no fanfare or trumpets, no elaborate stage. Proof of the importance of these words is found in the fact that they have come ringing down the centuries, teaching human-

⁴ John 4:23.

⁵ John 4:24 (Moffatt's Translation).

ity both the nature of Deity and the method of approach to the throne of God.

That the woman, true to the tradition of her people, looked for the coming of the Christ, of the Messiah, she made known to Jesus. Imagine her thought when the Master disclosed to her his true identity. "I that speak unto thee am he." ⁶ That she believed him is proved by her words to her own people. They, too, believed, and, coming out of the town, persuaded Jesus to remain with them.

Meantime, after the departure of the woman, Jesus taught a valuable lesson to his disciples. He was sustained by meat they knew not of, his spiritual perception, his understanding that God was his life, that Life was not dependent upon material food but stemmed from God, the source of all Being. He knew that in obedience to the divine Will lay his support, wholly apart from material conditions.

The second visit to Jerusalem is briefly announced in John 5: "After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem." ⁷ This, according to John's Gospel, appears to have been the second visit to the Holy City made by Jesus after he began his ministry in Galilee. Of just the character of the feast we are not aware. But the events which took place during this brief period are also of signal importance.

While Jesus was walking one Sabbath by the pool of Bethesda near the Temple area, he came upon a paralytic who had come to the pool to be healed. A superstition prevailed to the purport that an angel periodically stirred the waters, and if a sick man entered the pool at the moment of agitation he would be healed. The poor paralytic, being unable to move quickly, had been left

⁶ John 4:26.

⁷ John 5:1.

behind by those of more agile movement. Jesus saw the man's predicament and in his compassion inquired of him as to the situation. On learning the story, he told him to rise and take his bed and walk. Instantly the man was healed of his infirmity and went into the Temple.

Inquired of by surprised acquaintances as to the method of his healing, he told them of Jesus. Immediately there arose angry protests at the healing on the Sabbath. And, seeking out Jesus, the people accused him of violating the holy day. His defense was a new line of reasoning. Not for humanitarian reasons, not because he was Lord of the Sabbath, but because, as the Son of God, his healing of the man was well within his prerogative, did he make his defense. This stirred his questioners to even greater opposition. But the Master made no retreat in the face of their murderous hatred. He entered upon a discourse in which he boldly set forth his divine origin and the resultant authority. The claiming of God as his Father especially stirred the hatred of the Jews. It was intolerable that this man should not only break the Sabbath, but should add blasphemy by claiming to be God's Son. In their sight this made him equal with God. Surely such an imposter could not be tolerated!

Jesus recalled that the Pharisees had sent to John to inquire about the rabbi who was attracting so much attention: "You sent to John and he bore testimony to the truth; he was a burning and a shining lamp and you chose to rejoice for a while in his light. But I possess a testimony greater than that of John, for the deeds which the Father has granted me to accomplish, the very deeds on which I am engaged, are my testimony that the Father has sent me."⁸ And he further protested that while

⁸ Moffatt, James, *Life of Jesus*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, Ltd., 1930, p. 92.

they searched the Scripture in order to obtain eternal life, the same Scriptures which taught of him, yet they refused to accept him as sent from the Father. If they believed in Moses, they would also believe in him, for it was of him that the lawgiver wrote.

The Jews, on hearing these words from the young rabbi, were amazed, for, said they, "How can a man without education manage to read?" To this Jesus replied that his teaching was not his own but came from a higher source and anyone who would do God's Will would be able to judge the source of his words, whether they came from God or were on his own authority. Although Moses gave the Law, they were not obedient to it. "Else," said he, "why do you wish to kill me?"⁹ The Jews resented this implication, declaring that Jesus was mad. And Jesus pointed out to them that while they would perform the rite of circumcision on the Sabbath day, why should they accuse him for healing a man on the Sabbath?

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

XVI

Again in Galilee

AFTER a brief period in Jerusalem, so manifest to Jesus became the purpose of the Jews to do away with him, that he withdrew, returning to Galilee.

After arriving at the Lake of Tiberias, he crossed, one day, to the far side and was followed by a great crowd. It was the time of a feast of the Jews, the Passover, and when Jesus saw so many people about him who had made no preparation for being fed, he inquired of his disciple Philip where they could obtain bread enough to feed so many. It seems that he asked the question to test Philip's understanding of supply, rather than to indicate any doubt on his own part as to the Source of all supply. Philip, not perceiving Jesus' intent in asking him, replied that two hundred pennyworth of bread would not be sufficient to feed so many, thus indicating his view of the task as hopeless. Andrew, overhearing the conversation, told the Master that a lad was present who had five barley loaves and two small fishes, a mere pittance among so many. When the crowd at Jesus' request had seated themselves on the thick grass, he took the loaves—blessed them—and gave to his disciples, who in turn distributed to the hungry crowd.

When the multitude had been fed, Jesus instructed that the fragments be gathered up that nothing be lost. Twelve baskets were filled with the food that remained. Little wonder that the crowd marveled at the demonstration. It was far beyond their comprehension that bread could be produced except through the process

which included the raising of wheat, its reduction to flour, and the baking with certain necessary ingredients. This was the process which the carnal mind had established as necessary to the production of bread. Jesus knew a better, a briefer method. Through his spiritual understanding he was able to set aside these laws as made by man, and not by God. In this manner he commanded the production of material bread as certainly as he mastered and overcame any so-called material law. He could as well have fed ten thousand as five thousand, had there been the need. Surely he knew matter to be but the subjective state of the mortal or carnal mind. He could control its beliefs through his knowledge of its nature. To meet the human need, he met and mastered at will material law in its every phase. He completely nullified its seeming reality. Thus he proved himself to be the most practical of metaphysicians, in that he utilized his understanding in humanity's behalf.

The Gospels contain indisputable proof that Jesus possessed complete authority over every type of material belief, over every material law. So conscious was he of the divine Presence, of his relation to the Father and what that understanding conferred upon him, that it enabled him to serve poor humanity in practical ways. It also enabled him successfully to resist and set aside the modes and methods, the formalism and dogmas of the Jewish religion. He saw that the ancient worship had departed from the spiritual status attained by many of the prophets. No longer were the blessings experienced that came to the people when in the old days they had accepted the words of their spiritually minded seers and made their teachings the Way of Life. He knew it was the contrite heart, obedient to the divine Will—the mental attitude of the publican—not the conceit of the Pharisee, that won divine pardon. Jesus, indeed, brought

grace and truth, without which the Law had become cold and repellent. Not "thou shalt not," but rather, "come unto me," was the bidding of that divine, all-inclusive Love which Jesus knew God to be.

* * * * *

As Jesus' teachings and works increasingly impressed the people, it inevitably followed that they pondered deeply his exact status. Convinced as many were that he was sent of God, that he had come in the fulfillment of prophecy as the Messiah long looked for, they sought to place him in the position which became his authority. They would make him their king, for in the role of a mighty ruler they had foreseen the coming of the one who was to restore Israel to its rightful place and influence. Jesus discerned their intent, and, conscious of the disaster it would bring to him and to the work before him to be thus regarded, withdrew "into a mountain himself alone."¹

The disciples, uneasy and distraught at the absence of their Master, took ship to cross the sea. When there arose one of those sudden and violent storms for which the Sea of Galilee is noted, they were filled with fear. Presently Jesus came walking on the water and reassured them, and "immediately the ship was at the land whither they went."²

These occurrences further illustrate Jesus' complete mastery over so-called physical law. In defiance of the law of gravitation he walked on the water. Knowing as he did that God is the only Lawgiver, that divine Law is the only Law, he nullified the belief in a material law, even the law of gravitation, so generally regarded as irresistible. Surely, if matter is unreal, has no exist-

¹ John 6:15.

² John 6:21.

ence in God's universe, its laws have no basis in reality. Therefore, there can be no authority in material law beyond the common belief about it.

Furthermore, the Gospel narrative plainly indicates that in this instance Jesus also overcame the phenomena termed time and space. "Immediately the ship was at the land." In a definite sense Jesus crossed as quickly as thought and took the ship with him, overcoming the belief in the necessity of time during which to transport the boat over a space which had no existence except in belief.

Jesus lived in a state of consciousness which knew both time and space to be concepts of a mortal or carnal mind, a mind the claims of which were but false beliefs to be corrected through the spiritual understanding that neither time nor space has standing or reality in the divine economy. So complete was his knowledge of God, of divine omnipotence and omnipresence, of God's allness, that matter and its phenomena were nullified at will. But it is to be observed that the Nazarene never used this understanding for personal gain; only to promote his mission as Saviour and Way-Shower to mankind.

The crowd, it appears, followed Jesus to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, as though to experience another miracle of being fed. Aware of this, he told them plainly that it was the food and not the spiritual import of the miracle which attracted them. And he took occasion to admonish them that the bread of Life, the meat which endureth unto everlasting life, alone was worth striving for. Impressed by what they had seen, they inquired how they might work as he was working. First of all they must recognize him in his true role, and believe on him as the Son of God. Persisting in their quest, they sought a sign. Moses had given them bread from heaven. Jesus assured them that the bread Moses

gave was perishable, but what he gave was the true bread, the Christ, Truth, which, when partaken of, gives eternal life to all. Deeply impressed by his words, some asked that this true bread be given them.

There followed a priceless discourse upon the Master's status and mission. The Christ, that is, the divine nature of Jesus, was indeed the Son of God. Those who recognized him as such and believed on him should live forever. This stirred much dissension in the crowd. Many saw him only as the carpenter's son, utterly failing to see him as the Christ, the divine representative. To their blind eyes the physical Jesus utterly obscured his spiritual nature, the Christ, the likeness of God. But the Master, determined to be understood, drives home the truth of his divine nature as the Son of God, and this truth is the veritable bread of Life. Those who partake of it will live forever, for since the truth about God and His universe is eternal, they who grasp it are in the degree of their comprehension gaining eternal life. Jesus clearly declared his origin, that his spiritual selfhood, the Christ, Truth, came from God. This understanding sustained him throughout his ministry. It gave him strength and fortitude to accomplish the mighty purpose for which he was sent of God.

So revolutionary, so radical was this teaching that many who had glimpsed something of the substance of his teaching were unable to grasp its tremendous import. These turned away and were no longer his followers. Observing their unbelief, he asked what would they conclude if they saw "the Son of man ascend up where he was before?"³ He declared emphatically, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."⁴

³ John 6:62.

⁴ John 6:63.

In no more definite terms could the Master have conveyed the assurance that the truth of his words was eternal. The Christ was finding expression through this mightiest of men.

So many turned away at this time that Jesus was led to query of his intimate disciples, the Twelve, "Will ye also go away?"⁵ Simon, ever-ready spokesman for his fellows, replied, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." In his reply Jesus indicates that one of the Twelve was a devil, there to betray him.

⁵ John 6:67 f.

XVII

Source of Jesus' Authority

REGARDING the authority by which Jesus performed the many works which seemed miraculous to the on-lookers, and the position which he assumed in many of his revolutionary sayings, questions were often raised, especially by those who did not accept his mission as divine. What manner of man was this who commanded the winds to desist, and they obeyed him; who bade the evil spirits to depart from the sick and decrepit, and they departed; who fed the hungry multitude to repletion with a few loaves and fishes; who took the boat in which he and his companions were crossing the lake immediately to the farther shore? What was the source of his authority? Whence came the power which enabled him to perform such wondrous works?

It was quickly recognized that Jesus spoke not as a charlatan, as an imposter, who had assumed authority to which he was not entitled. "For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."¹ Matthew's comparison between the teaching of the Nazarene and that of the scribes contains a subtle suggestion indicating that Matthew was not impressed with the teachings of the scribes, because they had assumed an authority to which they were not justly entitled. Not so with Jesus. His very manner added conviction to his words. Moreover, had he not proved his words by his works?

Jesus was little inclined to satisfy the curiosity of his

¹ Matthew 7:29.

opponents, who repeatedly questioned his authority. He well knew their purpose in plying him with their insistent and often impertinent queries. Skillfully did he turn away these unsympathetic questioners when they asked him in the Temple as to his authority. He promised to tell them if they would answer his question. Was John's baptism from heaven? So utterly nonplussed were they that they withdrew in confusion. "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things."² They had not answered his queries; hence he was absolved from all obligation to answer theirs.

In the beginning of Mark's Gospel, the deep impression made upon the people by Jesus' healing works is clearly apparent. In the synagogue at Capernaum a man with an unclean spirit interrupted the service with a plea to be let alone, for the poor man recognized in Jesus the spiritual power to destroy the tormentor. Jesus rebuked the error and healed the sufferer. Here was something new, something wholly unfamiliar to the onlooker. "And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him."³ We can easily believe that in the very beginning of the Master's ministry such miraculous workings stirred the deepest curiosity as to the source of a power so effective in destroying the evil belief, probably some form of dementia.

The import of Jesus' career as expressed in his teachings and impressively shown forth in his works was that, like all God-sent prophets, it derived not from authority bestowed by men but that it came from God. Spiritual power imparts its own authority. Therefore no earthly

² Matthew 21:27.

³ Mark 1:27.

influence could take from it or add to it. Jesus' authority derived exclusively from his knowledge of God, of himself as the Christ, and of man's spiritual perfection as the Son of God. Convinced of this as he was, convinced beyond possibility of doubt, he drew upon the understanding which constituted his authority. As his spiritual understanding unfolded, as he became more conscious of his divine nature and of God's immanence, his authority was correspondingly enhanced; so potent, in fact, did it become, that he could command the entire round of natural phenomena. Not only did the winds and waves obey him, but his control of his material sense of body was complete.

The extent of his authority was proportionate to the degree of his understanding. Therefore, as Jesus was able to impart to others something of this same understanding, this knowledge of God, their authority, too, increased in proportion to their spiritual gain. Thus, at the beginning of the ninth chapter of Luke, it is related that in sending out the Twelve on their first missionary adventure, he "gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases."⁴

The inference plainly is that the instructions in things of the Spirit which Jesus had given those intimate friends and companions had endowed them with a mental state of authority, less in degree, to be sure, but similar to that which he had gained through his years of spiritual unfoldment. It was understanding of the spiritual facts of the universe, of God and His creation, that conferred the authority by which these pupils of the Master were enabled to carry forward the Christ ministry in healing the sick and reforming the sinner.

Jesus invariably recognized that God was the source

⁴Luke 9:1.

of his authority. "I can of mine own self do nothing,"⁵ and "the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works"⁶ are sayings which clearly signify that Jesus knew and recognized the one source of authority; and he possessed this in degree as he expressed the Christ, Truth, the truth about God and His universe.

In the somewhat apocalyptic statement in John 5, he refers to the fact that this life derives from God, who is Life. And furthermore, God "hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man."⁷ To execute judgment implies the ability to distinguish between good and evil, the true and the false, between reality and unreality. This authority would inevitably follow upon the understanding of reality, that all that is real, perfect, and eternal is in the realm of Spirit. All else is temporal, unreal, because material. This understanding made Jesus the master metaphysician. He above all others understood the one Mind, God; and correlatively he knew the unreality of the carnal mind in all its ramifications, in all its claims to the prerogatives of the divine Mind. It was this understanding which conferred upon him authority over every type of material phenomenon.

It is patent to the student of the Four Gospels that Jesus was thoroughly familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures, for he frequently quoted from them. "It is written" prefaced many of his lessons. When he was confronted by the tempter in the wilderness, each denial of the proposition placed before him was prefaced by this reference to the ancient Scriptures which Jesus accepted as authoritative. "It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the

⁵ John 5:30.

⁶ John 14:10.

⁷ John 5:27.

Lord thy God,"⁸ was his perfect answer to the offerings of the evil one. Nor was he thrown off guard or entrapped because the temptation was couched in Scriptural language. Even Satan could quote Scripture. But this ability conferred upon the evil one had no authority, for he was the prince of unbelievers.

Again in the Scriptures did Jesus find authority for cleansing the Temple of those whose merchantry defiled it. "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves."⁹ His devotion to true worship made of the Temple a holy place from which worldliness in whatsoever form should be excluded. Even at the beginning of the events which immediately precede the crucifixion, Jesus, in speaking to his disciples, again quoted from the Hebrew Scriptures as prophetic of the events about to occur. "You will all be disconcerted over me tonight, for it is written, I will strike at the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered."¹⁰ Jesus was convinced of the accuracy of the Old Testament prophecies. He knew that through spiritual might did the prophets of old foreknow and foretell the course events would take in the development of human experience.

An especially important reference to the Hebrew Scriptures is found in the sixth chapter of John's Gospel. Addressing the crowd, which included many unbelievers, Jesus told them frankly that no man could come to him, to the Christ, unless the Father should draw him. And he added, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto

⁸ Matthew 4:7.

⁹ Matthew 21:13.

¹⁰ Matthew 26:31 (Moffatt's Translation).

me.”¹¹ And there follow the priceless words which define the bread of life. Thus it is evident that Jesus gained much of the understanding from which he derived his authority from the Hebrew Scriptures; and his authority he knew full well. It is apparent that he regarded the prophet Isaiah as a true prophet.

¹¹ John 6:45.

XVIII

Jesus' Concept of God

THE Old Testament contains no arguments to prove the existence of God. To those early worshipers of the one God, whose words are recorded in the Hebrew Bible, no argument was necessary. God was to them a very real Being to whose worship they were deeply consecrated; and God was, in their understanding, both a rewarder of the faithful and a punisher of the delinquent. As formalism developed in the methods of worship, as the ritual became more crystallized, their concept of God accordingly hardened, even to the degree that many acts attributed to Jehovah can scarcely be judged as other than cruel, as suggestive of a king willing to kill the enemy as well as to cherish the faithful. The concept of God as Father, however, had its beginnings long before the coming of the Nazarene. The great necessity was to reform this concept, if the true sense of fatherhood was to be made manifest.

From the beginning Jesus accepted the fact of God as reality. He introduced no argument to prove that there is a divine Power, the Cause and Creator of the universe. His endeavor was to make known the character of God, His qualities and attributes, and, through the revelation of the nature of Deity, to introduce His Kingdom. His central thought regarding God finds expression in the terms "Father" and "Fatherhood." Constantly did he present this concept of God as Father, with all that term implies, vastly more than is embodied in the highest human sense of fatherhood. The Father

conceived by Jesus was as high above the human concept as the heavens are higher than the earth. The idea embodied in the term "Father," as used by Jesus, was the most precise expression of the divine nature and of God's relation to His creation, to man and the universe.

The earliest record of any expression from Jesus regarding God relates to the incident when he, at the age of twelve, was found arguing in the Temple with the learned doctors. That the concept of God as Father was uppermost in his thought is evident from his words. "Did you not know I had to be at my Father's house?"¹ Even at this tender age the youthful Jesus was thinking of God as Father, and that his proper place was in the Temple, the center of worship, of his Father. His concept of Deity unfolded as the Christ, Truth, found ever larger expression in his consciousness. "My Father," "Your Father," "Our Father" were terms which frequently fell from his lips, proving beyond possibility of refutation that he knew God, not as his Father alone, but as the Father of all. And the inevitable corollary to this concept was the grand brotherhood of man, all created by one Father, hence constituting one family, one brotherhood.

Again, when Jesus was emerging from the river after having been baptized by John, the voice from Heaven, from God, declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."² This could scarcely have failed to strengthen the conviction held from his youth that God was in reality his Father. Also on the Mount of Transfiguration was this confirmed. "This is my beloved Son . . . hear ye him"³ was another inescapable proof

¹ Luke 2:49 (Moffatt's Translation).

² Matthew 3:17.

³ Matthew 17:5.

of the eternal relationship existing between God as the Father and His son.

Jesus as the Christ had a dual sonship with the Father. As we have said, Mary's perception of God, the Father, enabled her to bear the Christ child. Hence, in a sense, God became the Father of Jesus, the human. As the Christ was the direct emanation from God, His messenger, the Christ, which Jesus so fully manifested, was the Son of God. Hence his dual claim to God as Father.

During the last days of his teaching in the Temple, the Master brought out very clearly both the relation of the Christ to his hearers and the fact of God's Fatherhood. After denouncing the evil ways of the scribes and Pharisees, he pointed the true way. "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven." ⁴ The Christ as Truth which Jesus expressed was to be the Teacher of all men; and all abiding in that state of consciousness which is Heaven have one Father.

That Jesus looked to God as the source of all being and consequently of all the capability which he seemed to possess, he plainly brought out on divers occasions. John 5:30 and 14:10 leave no doubt of his complete reliance upon God as the source of his understanding and capability. The Father, possessing all power, all intelligence, and ever present, was the inexhaustible source from which Jesus constantly drew in order to carry forward the mission entrusted to him. Thus was confirmed the statement of creation so definitely expressed in the first chapter of Genesis: Man created in God's image and likeness must express the nature of his Creator, must

⁴ Matthew 23:8, 9.

possess, by very virtue of that type of creation, the qualities and attributes of Deity.

Now, since Jesus definitely stated the nature of God—that God is Spirit—it inevitably follows that man in God's likeness is spiritual, that by no possibility could a mortal, a material sense of man, be the likeness of Spirit, infinite and omnipotent. This conclusion, to be sure, contradicts the long-cherished belief that a mortal is God's image. It was this false reasoning that enabled Voltaire to make his incisive if somewhat cynical remark, "God made man in His likeness, and man returned the compliment," withal a searching and revelatory aphorism. Men, that is, mortals, have returned the compliment in so far as they have conceived themselves to be the likeness of their Creator—mortal man, the likeness of Spirit. This has led to the anthropomorphic sense of Deity, a manlike God, a concept which completely refutes the teachings of Jesus, who beyond doubt understood God, His nature and qualities, better than any other who had ever appeared on earth.

Surely a wrong concept of Deity must lead to a wrong sense of man, of life and its meaning. How important, then, becomes the necessity to understand God aright! How can God be worshiped "in spirit and in truth"⁵ if He is held to be something wholly unlike what He really is? In the light of this inescapable reasoning, the teachings of Jesus regarding God and man's relation to Him take on a deeper and ever deeper meaning as the significance of this relationship begins to dawn in human consciousness. Jesus indeed becomes man's Way-Shower to God, to Truth and Life, to the everlasting Kingdom.

Jesus' concept of God as the loving Father has prece-

⁵ John 4:23.

dent in the Old Testament. The idea of God as Spirit had beginnings in the early prophets. Moses declared, "And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn."⁶ Jeremiah also expresses the loving care manifested by Jehovah toward his people. Speaking through the Prophet: "But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? And I said, Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me."⁷ Here is a definite command from Jehovah expressing the relationship which He wished to be recognized between Himself and the people. The writer of second Isaiah also records the same sentiment, praying, "But now, O Lord, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand."⁸ Thus we see that in calling God his Father, Jesus was but following a line of reasoning that sprang from the ancient prophets as their concept of God took on a more spiritual aspect. His work was to clarify and more definitely spiritualize the concept.

With it established that God is the Father of all, the queries naturally arise, What is the nature of this All-Father? What is He like? And the teachings of the Master leave us in no doubt as to the nature and quality of God. "Like Father like son" is a logical aphorism. For, since Jesus emphatically declared that his own nature, that is, the Christ, was derived from God, his own teachings, life, and character are perfectly revelatory of the divine. That this God who is Father of all is intelligent and is infinite, the whole creation proclaims. The fact that Jesus drew from his divine Source his unparalleled understanding of men and things is proof of

⁶ Exodus 4:22.

⁷ Jeremiah 3:19.

⁸ Isaiah 64:8.

the quality of the divine Source. That God is infinite Mind, that is, divine intelligence, is a manifest fact both from the teachings of Jesus and the orderliness of the universe.

Order, not chaos, is the rule of the creation, and this order is the expression of a divine Law which is above the so-called material law, the latter being but the human concept of the true Law which governs all. This Law is the expression of a fixed Principle, unvarying and eternal. Into this Law mortals project their own discoveries, but the result is not invariable law. Newton's law of light was long held to be a permanent, unchanging law. Einstein refuted this and proclaimed another law, invariable and permanent. Now, however, this is challenged by his own later discoveries. And so the search goes on for the law which governs the universe, the law which never changes, never varies. It is the Law of the divine principle of the universe. When this is recognized and accepted, surely the quest will end, for the ultimate will have been reached.

Paul touched upon this when he asserted that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."⁹ Moffatt clarifies the passage: "the law of the Spirit brings the life which is in Christ Jesus." Thus Paul saw this Law of the Spirit as expressed in the life manifested by the Master. And that this Law was present, recognized, and utilized by Christ Jesus was demonstrated beyond cavil, was exemplified in his teachings and works.

Hosea, also, saw God as Father, caring for His children. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt."¹⁰ "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as

⁹ Romans 8:2.

¹⁰ Hosea 11:1 ff.

they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.”¹¹ This ancient prophet conceived of the Father as loving His children, as caring for them, as protecting and providing for them, as relieving them of their burdens, their yokes. That the nation rejected her prophets did not turn this Father from His children. They continued to suffer for their disobedience, but the Father’s love and care never changed. In fact, this Father who is Love gives all and takes nothing in return. If it is received, ineffable blessings ensue. If rejected, Love never ceases to love, but the one who rejects it still stumbles on in blindness, quite oblivious of the blessings that await obedience and recognition of the Father as the source of all blessedness.

This is the purport of Jesus’ teachings. While he did not directly declare God as Love, unchanging and all embracing, yet the implications of his teachings and life are nothing less. Moreover, that disciple who saw deepest into the spiritual nature of the Christ and who, in consequence, best understood the purport of the Master’s mission, declared directly and as definitely, “God is love.”¹² No other conclusion can be justifiably drawn from the revelation of the Father through His Christ, incarnate in the man Jesus.

Mortals can more readily be led by love than through fear. The Kingdom is the abiding place of Love; and not fear but trustfulness and humility, even the faith of the little child, lead to the arms of Love. This Love is universal, is boundless. No phase of error, no activity of evil can destroy it or change its holy purpose. All His children are the offspring of this Love; and the way was opened by this Man of Nazareth to gain this Love, which forever blesses, heals, and saves. Mortals become

¹¹ Hosea 11:4.

¹² I John 4:8.

the children of Love by laying off everything unlike its nature.

This forgiving Father, who is Love, finds inspiring exemplification in the parable of the Good Shepherd. No metaphor ever sank deeper into the heart of Christendom than this. Not the ninety and nine who are safely folded in the Father's love, but the one who, not understanding what is available to soften and hearten the Way of Life, goes astray. But the Father never deserts His own. He searches and searches, sends out His love, His grace and solicitude, until even the straying heart is reached, and the one who was lost is found and finally reaches the Father's fold. His heart is keenly touched and regenerated by the Christ-messenger from divine Love, from the always pitying Father.

Jesus, master of impressive speech, again touched the depths of the Father's forgiveness in the incomparable parable known as the Prodigal Son. Should it not rather have been characterized as the parable of the Forgiving Father? For the most careful analysis reveals as the outstanding fact that this true father had never ceased to love his wayward son; had never ceased to cherish deep concern for his welfare; was ready at the first glimpse of his chastened offspring returning to the father's house to receive him with outstretched arms, to give him the heartiest welcome, regardless of the fact that he himself had been quite neglected by the wandering one.

There could scarcely be conceived a more perfect illustration of God's attitude toward His offspring. Disregarding entirely the unfilial attitude of the son, He pours out without stint that irrepressible, fervent, and irresistible desire to bless all His children, which forever characterizes this perfect Father, infinite Love. This infinite Love constantly encompasses all. If we are obliv-

ious of its presence, its blessings are unrecognized. But through consciousness of its ineffable kindness and mercy and awareness of its unlimited capacity for forgiveness, is the way of entrance into the very heart of the Kingdom.

In another impressive parable, recorded by Luke, Jesus drives home the fact of the Father's love for every one of His children. If a woman having ten pieces of silver loses one, does she not use all means to find it, lighting a lamp, sweeping the floor, and searching diligently until she finds it? Upon finding it, she so greatly rejoices that she calls in her friends that they may rejoice with her over the recovery of that which was lost. And the Master summarizes the parable with, "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."¹⁸ This all-loving Father never loses sight of His own. Forever impartial, He never ceases to care equally for all. When the stray one returns, there is great rejoicing for the triumph of good over evil, of Love over sin and its expressions. Even the angels, the perfect ideas of God, rejoice forever over Truth's triumphs.

How far from the concept of God as angry and vengeful are these examples of the Father's forgiveness! The only requisite for the reception of this forgiveness and the accompanying spiritual joy is repentance. Repentance and reformation are the roads that lead back to the Father's house. So long as mortals hold to evil, to the belief that evil is desirable, is real, and has power to govern and control mortals, so long will they wander in the ways of the flesh, in the paths of unrighteousness, and the outcome will be suffering and despair.

Jesus was not in doubt that one's repaying is exactly in

¹⁸ Luke 15:10.

accord with his sowing. But when the sowing of evil ceases, when error and falsity no longer seem real and worthy, then is the stray one ready for the good seed, for the reception of the spiritual Truth, the Christ that heals through its transforming power. Asking for bread, one never receives a stone from the loving Father. This all-loving God, whose Kingdom is the abiding place of all that is good, beautiful, and perfect, can give only good gifts. In his storehouse there is no evil, no sin, no sorrow, no death, but Life, and that Life expressed ever more abundantly, as the capacity for, ability to receive, and desire for God's blessings unfold. Can there be any slightest doubt of the incomparable, the priceless value of this reward for righteousness, which Jesus so emphatically taught and exemplified?

Jesus' teaching regarding the forgiveness of sin was very definite. Being a skillful metaphysician, as he plainly was, he saw that the cause of the discords to which humanity was so generally subjected was wrong thinking. That is, these discords had a mental cause, and that cause was sin, violation of God's Law. Those who were living in disobedience to the Father's Will of necessity manifested some form of discord. This was not always expressed physically, but in mental states, such as worry, fear, or sorrow, poverty, et cetera. The more malicious mental states, such as hatred, envy, revengefulness, lust, were the procuring causes of the diseases which affected a great portion of the population. The cause being mental, then, the cure was to be found in improved mental conditions.

To the impotent man whom the Master healed at the pool of Bethesda, he said, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."¹⁴ Thus plainly did he detect the

¹⁴ John 5:14.

cause of the impotency and point the remedy—to stop sinning. He knew that suffering follows sinful beliefs, and when these are eliminated through the Christ, Truth, the outward expression of sinful thinking would vanish. To the woman taken in adultery, he made a like statement. “Go, and sin no more.”¹⁵ In neither case did he condemn the person, who, after all, was but the unconscious victim of wrong beliefs held, perhaps, as pleasurable and worthy. There was but one way to escape the penalty of physical suffering or punishment at the hands of the law, and that was to stop sinning.

Again, when he healed the man who, because of the press of the crowd, was let down through the roof, he said to the palsied, “Son . . . thy sins be forgiven thee.”¹⁶ And the man was healed. There could be no plainer proof of the intimate relation between the mental state and the physical. When sins are forgiven, that is, abandoned, inevitably the result of sinful thinking vanishes. Where there is no cause, there can be no effect. And this master metaphysician knew that cause is mental, and the healing must take place through a changed mental state on the part of the sinner.

It is little wonder that the Pharisees and scribes, steeped in the belief that God alone had the power to forgive sin, were astonished, even dismayed, at the seeming effrontery with which this young rabbi presumed to say, “Thy sins be forgiven.” To them he was assuming the divine prerogative, that which belonged only to God; hence he was a blasphemer.

In his healing works, the Master never condemned the sinning one. Rather did he admonish him to stop his evil ways, to cease sinning in order to escape the penalty of sin. On occasions, however, he castigated the hypo-

¹⁵ John 8:11.

¹⁶ Matthew 9:2.

crite and pretender in terms that were nothing less than terrible. In defending his authority and dignity, as recorded in the eighth chapter of John, Jesus denounced his accusers in terms as strong as language could afford.

Jesus constantly emphasized the need for faith in God. "Have faith in God"¹⁷ in words and deeds was his constant attitude. He so intimately knew the divine nature of God and what He does for man, that his faith was unshakable. It was his constant effort, therefore, to inspire those about him with something of his own sublime faith; and faith, that is, faith based upon understanding, could be gained only through knowledge of God. This accounts for his persistent efforts to have those about him know the Father, to become acquainted with His nature and availability to meet the human need.

As men came to know God, sin would disappear. One could not hold at the same time to the belief that man is the child of God, made in His image and likeness, and at the same time believe that man is a miserable sinner. Moreover, if sin be imputed to God's likeness, the conclusion cannot be escaped that God Himself is conscious of sin. This supposition approaches the realm of blasphemy. The God whom Jesus so faithfully served could never be possessed, that is, be conscious of, aught that was sinful, wrong, or evil. Therefore sin was and is a figment of the mortal or carnal mind, to be exorcised by the entrance of the Christ, the Truth about all things, all reality.

Freedom is gained in just this way, freedom from sin and its dire results, freedom from every condition that enslaves mankind. This is the purport of Jesus' words recorded by John. "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth,

¹⁷ Mark 11:22.

and the truth shall make you free.”¹⁸ They who would continue in his word, accept his teachings about God the Father and His Christ, which Jesus so successfully manifested, they would gain freedom from false beliefs, from false concepts of God and man, and the result would be release from sin and its punishment.

One of the primary results of gaining this truth is freedom from worry. We cannot trust God fully and worry about our human conditions, fearful of what may befall. Worry and fear are close kin. The remedy for both is that full faith in the presence of the Father—that He is Love, that He is continuously caring for His own, and that His likeness can never suffer or be deprived of His constant blessing and care.

Beautifully did Jesus convey this message: “Take no thought for your life. . . . Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? . . . Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. . . . Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed . . . for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.”¹⁹ If we trust God wholeheartedly, not blindly, but with understanding, the needed things will be added. This injunction by no means implies lassitude or indifference. Rather does it bespeak right action following upon righteous prayer, the motivation of faith based upon understanding.

Jesus' philosophy regarding sin was not so much to condemn it as to remove it through building up a mental state of righteousness, that is, of right thinking. Once this status is established, not only is sin excluded but the

¹⁸ John 8:31, 32.

¹⁹ Matthew 6:25, 28:32.

mental gates are shut against its further intrusion. How difficult sometimes was this process of excluding sin is appealingly illustrated by the brief parable of the Strong Man. How can an evil one enter into a strong man's house and spoil his goods except he first bind the strong man? Then the strong man's house is robbed. Evil cannot enter a mental household until room is made for it, until it gains admission through the consent to enter. To do this it must of necessity supplant the rightful occupant, the good to which man naturally holds.

This brief parable follows the Master's answer to the murmuring of the Pharisees that he was casting out devils, that is, was healing through evil power, through Beelzebub, the very leader of the evil spirits. In reply to this accusation, Jesus told them that a divided house cannot endure. In consequence, if the Prince of evil was casting out evil, it was a house divided against itself. How could such a home endure? Turning sharply upon his accusers, he demanded to know—if he were healing false beliefs through evil powers, what about their own children, who were also healing—referring, doubtless, to the work of the disciples. This was unanswerable.

Again were his enemies routed by his logic. Then he adds the comforting assurance that if he was healing sickness and sin righteously, by the Spirit of God, then assuredly the Kingdom of God was at hand. Evil never heals evil. Grapes are never gathered from thorns, nor figs from thistles. Evil never results from good, nor good from evil. False, sinful beliefs are never removed, never corrected, except through the presence and activity of Truth. For it is Truth alone that sets the captive free.

It is plainly patent from the Master's teaching that self-righteousness with merely a negative basis is not enough to insure the coming of the Christ-message that heals.

Unless one's righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, he does not enter the Kingdom, does not gain mental and spiritual freedom. The Love that heals humanity of its woes does not stop at the end of the first mile, does not falter in discouragement if its first efforts are not successful. Love is both patient and persistent. It goes a second mile joyously, inspired by the hope that during that extended effort the error will yield. It is during this second stage of the journey that many are brought to the Kingdom, find the Christ-presence at hand, and potent to heal.

No man has ever approximated the Nazarene in his patience, his willingness to endure insult and calumny, if such were necessary, to bring the lost sheep into the fold again. His love was tireless, not expressed in a negative series of prohibitions, of "thou shalt nots," but rather in the assurance that the loving Father was at hand, ready to forgive, that through divine grace would the sufferer, the sinful, the wanderer be brought into his divine heritage. The gospel of Love could never be harsh or obdurate. The wanderer, however, must come willingly back to the Father's house.

XIX

The Kingdom—Jesus' Teaching

STUDENTS of the Gospels, especially of the Synoptics, are impressed by the frequency of Jesus' reference to "the kingdom," and it seems that the terms "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" are alternatives. These synonymous terms occur approximately a hundred times in the Synoptics. In Mark and Luke the term is "the kingdom of God"; in Matthew it is usually "the kingdom of Heaven." Also at times the expression as it fell from the Master's lips was "the kingdom." Often in prayer and parable do these terms appear, so often in fact that we are convinced that the connotation is of deep significance.

In the first chapter of Mark's Gospel, the earliest of the Synoptics, occur the words, "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."¹ This was not a new idea. The concept of the Kingdom of God into which entrance was to be gained by strict adherence to the Law had long been held by the Hebrew race. But their concept of this heavenly state was quite unlike the concept held by Jesus. The Jewish belief regarding the Kingdom was of a glorified state, political as well as religious, ruled over by a King, a Messiah, whose highest purpose would be the restoration of the lost glory and grandeur

¹ Mark 1:14, 15.

of Israel. It was to be established by God's messenger on earth, but to continue into the state which was believed to lie beyond the pale of human experience. Both here and hereafter were the blessings of this restoration to be realized. But it was largely a materialistic concept, quite apart from the spiritual state which the Nazarene was so earnestly desirous of establishing as his greatest service to humanity.

That Jesus' reference was to a spiritually mental state, his words conclusively prove. This Kingdom just at hand he declared to be "within you." Within what? Within consciousness, to be sure! "Neither . . . Lo here! or, lo there!"² eliminates all possibility of this Kingdom being established in space, as having a spatial locale. That is to say, Jesus saw this Kingdom as the state of purified consciousness, of a spiritual mentality freed from all materiality, conscious only of spiritual Truth, of God and His perfect universe. From such a mental state is eliminated all that is evil, all that restricts or confuses, a state freed from all false desire, but rejoicing forever in that perfect bliss, that perfect state of freedom which belongs to the children of God.

This Kingdom, the goal toward which all the teachings of Jesus point, was without a king, except the Great King, the Ruler of the universe, the one God, who was, and is, and ever will be. He alone was the King, the great King, who had prepared His house of many mansions, where His children would forever dwell. This was wholly a spiritual state, which in its fullness would be gained only as all material sense should be abandoned, only as the false sense of man should be surrendered for the understanding that man as the son of God is and always has been spiritual and perfect. This man has, in

²Luke 17:21.

fact, never left the state of perfection in which the Father created him and has never ceased to hold him.

Jesus knew that the real man, made in God's likeness, had never fallen, had never ceased to be that likeness; hence had never been out of the Kingdom. But he also knew that poor mortals—sinning, woe-beset, suffering humanity—often dwelling in the depths of despair, in dire want and misery, were never the children of God but poor counterfeits, to be awakened from their bad dream and led to the Father's house, that glorious Kingdom where the "life and life more abundantly"³ was to be gained and demonstrated. It was to the task of shepherding humanity into this glorified state that Jesus gave his utmost efforts.

That this Kingdom was not a far-off state, in time or space, to be brought into realization only at some future time, and in some distant place, is the very essence of his message. The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, is to be entered upon here and now. How? By laying hold of the priceless purport of his message, by laying off the old man, of whose character Paul was so keenly aware, and by laying on the new man, that is, by exchanging a false concept of man for the true. This was the means by which this Kingdom was and is to be gained.

The Gospels from start to finish ring with this great truth, so important that Jesus made it a keynote of his message. To the businessman he gave the perfect rule for success. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"⁴ is the admonition of the most successful man who ever appeared on earth. Why? In seeking the Kingdom, the search necessitates the laying off of all material

³ John 10:10.

⁴ Matthew 6:33.

desires, all selfishness, all sinful ways, and the turning wholeheartedly to the gaining of that spiritual consciousness which constitutes the Kingdom of God. In that Kingdom plenty always abounds; and mortals who lay all desire upon the Christ-altar will reap their just reward, including the "things" regarded as necessary to a harmonious and successful human experience. That this rule is so rarely applied detracts in no degree from its practicability. Carried out in both letter and spirit, it insures the experience of the Kingdom here and now.

That this Kingdom of God was always at hand, the Master drove home with unvarying emphasis. The seventy disciples he instructed to heal the sick, saying unto them, "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."⁵ They were to be equally sure that even in the case of those who did not receive them hospitably, the Kingdom was nevertheless at hand—conclusive proof that the Master's concept was of a spiritual state, a state of consciousness into which entrance could be gained by all who were prepared to exchange the false for the true. He saw sinners, even publicans and harlots, more prepared to leave their sinful ways for the blessings of the Kingdom than were the Pharisees, those who were bound by ritual and steeped in the essence of formalism and dogma. This was equivalent to saying that those who have not accepted a false concept of God and His Kingdom are more easily led to the heavenly state than those who have accepted a formal and dogmatic concept to which they are committed by inheritance, by personal experience, and, as it seems, often by vested interests.

The great Teacher was ever ready to face evil, even in high places, with the simple gospel of the Kingdom. Of the nature of this Kingdom, Jesus gave ample illus-

⁵ Luke 10:9.

tration. When the disciples rebuked the parents who brought their children to the Master to be healed and blessed, he was displeased, saying "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God."⁶ The child-thought, truthful, loving, kind, unselfish, was receptive to the concept of the infinite Father, ready, willing, and able to meet their every need.

When the Master enjoined another who had been impressed by his words and works with "Follow me,"⁷ the man replied that he must first go to bury his father. Jesus, knowing the results of accepting the rituals of mortality, told him plainly to let those who were dead, that is, those whose thought had not been touched by the truth, bury their own dead, their own false beliefs. But he was to go and preach the Kingdom of God. And another who desired to say farewell to his family, Jesus rebuked with, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."⁸ Entrance to the Kingdom was not to be made by the halting and half-hearted. Those who still wished to continue their hold upon the material conditions of existence were scarcely prepared to enter upon a spiritual state, however promising it might be.

It is the poor in spirit who are prepared for this all-important step—the humble, the meek, those having the faith of the little child; those who are convinced that their heavenly Father is prepared to bestow blessings so precious that there is no parallel in human experience. Not by repetition of words, not even by saying "Lord, Lord," is this entrance to be gained, but rather by doing

⁶ Mark 10:14.

⁷ Matthew 8:22.

⁸ Luke 9:62.

God's Will, that is, by understanding the divine demands and being obedient thereto this exalted state is gained.

The way is indeed strait and narrow, but those who traverse it are blessed beyond human realization, for they are constantly awakening to the state of being which, in beauty and goodness, in glory and perfection, transcends all material experience. It is the state of consciousness from which is excluded all fear, all doubt, all worry, all sense of limitation. As we have seen, it is so priceless that Jesus likened it to the pearl of great price which, when hidden in a field, he who would possess it would gladly sell all he had, dispose of all his earthly possessions, in order to acquire it. How greatly did this man who had not where to lay his head prize the heavenly state of which he was so completely conscious! How poignantly he who knew its priceless value desired to share it with suffering humanity!

The effort of many scholars to project a political purpose into Jesus' frequent assertion regarding the Kingdom quite overlooks the main purpose of his works. The crux of Jesus' mission was to reform humanity, to reform it through transforming of the human mentality, to change it from a material to a spiritual basis. With this change the Kingdom would come, be established in the individual consciousness. The very nature of the problem determines the process. It was not to be a cataclysmic event, a sudden change of consciousness. Rather was it to be a process of unfoldment, as the truth about God, His Christ, and man gained entrance into mortal thought. This coming of the Christ was precisely the experience so beautifully expressed in Revelation: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will

come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”⁹

Now this coming of the Christ into human consciousness was the beginning of that change of thought, that process of evangelization of the individual, which constitutes the gaining of the Kingdom. Surely, materiality, carnal beliefs, can have no place in the divine consciousness, that state of the infinite Mind which is forever aware of all reality, of all that really exists. Paul was thoroughly convinced that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom. Only that state of consciousness which is aware of spiritual things is prepared for the heavenly state. This does not imply that the Kingdom is gained by one supreme effort, but rather is it a gradual process of unfoldment whereby the individual mentality becomes aware of heavenly things.

The Kingdom of Heaven is not to be taken by violence. In fact, since violence is wholly a condition of the carnal mind, it can by no means aid in gaining the heavenly state, where peace and harmony forever abide. Entrance into the Kingdom is gradual. It is brought about by change of thought. It is wholly a problem of mental change, of transformation. Paul was fully aware of this when he wrote, “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”¹⁰ This transformation of the individual signifies his gradual entrance into the Kingdom, spiritual consciousness. When the individual consciousness has become thoroughly spiritualized, when it is aware only of spiritual truth, the Kingdom of God in the fullness of its blissful perfection is gained, not before.

That is not to say that every advance in improved

⁹ Revelation 3:20.

¹⁰ Romans 12:2.

thought, every overcoming of a mortal, sinful belief, does not progress one on the way. Rather does it emphasize that the Kingdom is gained by just this process; and heavenly blessings expressed in terms of human experience are gained step by step. The stress of life, the hardships, struggles, sorrows which so commonly beset the mortal way are lessened; the pathway of life grows brighter, the joys of spiritual living become more pronounced, as the process of entering the Kingdom proceeds.

Human experience has been likened to a rubber ball, which, perfect in form, is distorted and rendered shapeless as it is squeezed in the fingers. As one by one the compressing fingers are removed, the ball recovers its original symmetry, and, when completely released, it is restored to its original spherical perfection and beauty. So with human experience. The life apart from God is hidden under the pressure of material circumstances. The child of God was, is, never less than perfect, has never left the Kingdom in which the Father created him. But a false, material sense of life distorts the mortal sense of existence, which may become hard, cruel, and joyless. When spiritual truth, the Christ, enters, the constricting influences are removed one by one until life is seen in its original and constant perfection. Thus does the Kingdom appear.

But the gaining of the Kingdom is not a selfish process. He who lives selfishly, even though the purpose be to gain spiritual freedom, quite misses the mark. Jesus was emphatic on this point. "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."¹¹ The Golden Rule is a green light on this highway which leads all the way from mortal sense to spiritual triumph.

¹¹ Matthew 16:25.

That Jesus constantly sought and prayed for improved political and social conditions cannot be gainsaid. He did not, however, undertake mass movements. He joined in no revolutionary steps except through the evangelization of the individual. The individual was the basic unit of society. When the individual in some degree gained the Kingdom, then would reform take place in the methods of worship, in the social and political order of the people. The evangelized citizen would be a potent factor in the reformation of society. In fact, this reformation brought about by the advent of Truth in human consciousness would constitute the coming of the Kingdom in terms of better, more joyous living, in a type of society in which the Will of God would be the rule and order of the day.

None can doubt that since Jesus envisioned this state as a possibility of accomplishment, he strove to inaugurate it as the way of salvation from misgovernment, from the poverty, sickness, and misery which so characterized the people of his day. To be sure, when interrogated by Pilate if he were a king, the Nazarene did not deny the charge which was being brought against him. But he did instantly remove any political connotation which the term "king" implied. His Kingdom was not of this world, was not a political or social state, but rather was it that spiritual state of consciousness in which the Will of God was the rule and government.

The desire of the people to make him king, which increased as his wisdom and the potency of his works became apparent, he repeatedly thrust aside. But it is beyond question that the rulers, both of the Jewish hierarchy and of the Roman authority, believed that there was danger of the Master's becoming the leader of a revolution which well might destroy the power of both over the people. It was beyond the comprehension of

both priest and procurator that the Messianic mission was a purely spiritual experience. They could conceive only of an earthly kingdom, which implied military power and the authority of might. Jesus completely refuted this idea of a military or political Messiah.

Moreover, there is convincing evidence that the Kingdom which Jesus proclaimed was not nationalistic, was not limited to one race or nation. It was a universal Kingdom, open to all humanity who would accept the Christ-way—and there was none other. His attitude toward the publicans, his readiness to companion with the lowly, his healing of the centurion's servant, his ministry to the daughter of the Syrophenician woman, all attest the catholicity of his hope.

Furthermore, that Jesus shared not the Jewish prejudice against the Samaritans is clearly proved. One could scarcely conceive of the Master, with his sure sense of man's relation to God, allowing himself to be controlled by personal sense. He could scarcely hate persons, although he might stand in stern opposition to hypocrisy and dishonesty. As we have seen, it was the Samaritan among the ten lepers the Master healed who returned to give thanks. It was a Samaritan woman to whom Jesus revealed the fact that God is Spirit, and it was a Samaritan who ministered to the wounded man on the Jericho road. What stronger proof could be adduced as to the universality of his Messianic hope to establish the Kingdom than is found in these three striking examples? To be sure, Jesus began his ministry as a Jew, familiar with the Scriptures of the Jews and their methods of worship. But he shared not the racial inhibitions which would deny God's salvation, gained through the Christ, to all outside the group commonly termed the "Chosen People."

It is definitely apparent, then, that the establishment

of the Kingdom was the paramount purpose of the Nazarene's ministry. He approached the subject so frequently and in such a variety of ways that this conclusion is inevitable. To it so many of his parables are directed. In the parable of the Sower, the one who hears the word of the Kingdom but does not comprehend it fails to gain it; the evil one keeps him out. Again, as we have already seen, the Kingdom is like leaven hid in three measures of meal, three unlike types of mortal thought which, although unlike, yet are transformed by the word of Truth. Again the Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure, hid in a field, so precious that one who knows its value will sacrifice all for it. It is like a merchant man who seeks the best pearl. When he has found the most precious of all, he sells all his goods in order to buy it. It is like a net that gathered fish of many kinds within its folds, both good and bad. The fishermen, having learned to distinguish between good and evil, throw the latter away in order to enjoy the good, the blessings of the Kingdom.

In these and divers other forms of expression did the Master drive home the great fact that gaining the Kingdom is the way of salvation from all that restricts and burdens human experience, from sin in its manifold types, from sickness in its many forms, even from death itself. The Reverend E. Stanley Jones, distinguished Indian missionary, saw this clearly when, at the Ecumenical Congress held in Madras in December, 1938, he disagreed with many of the leaders who proclaimed the Church as the central fact of God's beneficence, because, said they, it is the vehicle by which the Kingdom is gained. But the vehicle is but a means to an end. The Kingdom, that state of divine consciousness in which abides only the perfect and eternal, the good

and the beautiful, is the ultimate, the Alpha and Omega of all true existence.

Jesus never misled or mistaught his listeners, whether his audience was the Twelve intimate students or the casual multitudes that constantly gathered to hear his pregnant words, or to witness his wondrous works. Surely, then, he engaged in no sophistry when teaching the disciples how to pray. "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"¹² carries two most incisive and important implications. This Kingdom, the center and circumference of his Messianic mission, was already established in heaven. It was the spiritual state, the state of consciousness which was governed by divine Will. Moreover, it could be gained and enjoyed in all its blessedness at that very time, else such prayer would have been a mockery. It is beyond the realm of reason that the great Teacher would have taught his dear friends, his students, disciples, and companions, the band which he was so earnestly striving to prepare to carry on the works of his ministry, to supplicate the divine Father for something quite unattainable.

We may, then, justifiably draw the conclusion that attainment of this Kingdom which he so frequently and so impressively acclaimed is a present possibility. The fact that many who now pray for this spiritual state are quite unprepared to receive it, in fact would be thoroughly alarmed if they felt that their prayers were to be immediately and fully answered, does not in any measure refute the implication that the Kingdom as conceived and proclaimed by him who founded Christianity was and is ever at hand, to be gained by all who accept and follow his teachings.

¹² Matthew 6:10.

That this Kingdom has been relegated to some future state, to be acquired, if at all, after and through the experience termed death, does not in any measure refute or deny the facts so appealingly set forth in the Gospels. The true situation could have scarcely been set forth with more emphasis or with more definite appeal. Nor could the rewards, the sure blessings to be derived from this experience, have been more emphatically presented. That poor humanity has been too blind to visualize it, too material minded to gain it, in no wise detracts from either its priceless value or its present possibility of attainment. The Kingdom is, and all may gain its dearest treasures.

XX

How the Kingdom Was to Be Established

GRANTED that the establishing of the Kingdom, both as a present possibility and as a perfect state of consciousness to be attained through complete transformation of the mortal or carnal mind, was the primary and paramount desire of Jesus, the query naturally arises as to the method he adopted for bringing this holy purpose into realization. It is clear that when the Master was awakened to the purpose of his mission, when he first realized that God, his Father, and the Father of all, was potent and available to meet the urgent needs of humanity, when he first recognized the marvelous significance of this fact, there arose immediately the desire in some manner to apprise the people of what he knew. Such important understanding must be revealed and motivated for the salvation of suffering humanity.

Upon him, to whom this revelation had come, devolved the responsibility of both teacher and prophet. He foresaw and foreknew. Therefore he must warn the people, not to frighten them but to relieve them of their fright, of their self-imposed burdens, burdens which too often made life a paradox of suffering and want. Surely, his responsibility was great.

At first Jesus believed that the Jewish hierarchy would receive his message with open arms. He was but carrying forward to a bright conclusion that for which their hearts had for ages longed—the restoration of Israel in a glory which paralleled their ancient kingdom. But this newcomer had a message of vastly different import. In

fulfilling the Law, he was to establish a sovereignty of Love wherein the old concepts of Jehovah, a God of love and of hate, of rewards and of punishment, of peace and of war, were to be supplanted by the concept of a God who is Spirit, a God of unchanging love for all His children, sovereign in a state of consciousness where only peace, truth, love, and mercy holds sway.

It was with the keen expectancy that his good news would be graciously accepted that the Master set out upon his incomparable task. He was at first received in the synagogues as rabbis (holy teachers) were generally received. But his doctrine stirred the Jews. It was unlike the Law and the Prophets, which they were accustomed to have expounded in accordance with a well-established ritual. Here was a revolutionary who was denying the ancient rites, who was introducing new views of Deity, was working miracles of healing, even on the Sabbath day; was breaking their Law, given by their great lawgiver, even by Moses himself. This naturally led to strife, engendered by disagreement with the new gospel. When it followed that Jesus was no longer welcome in the synagogues, only two courses were open to him: either to abandon his purpose, which was unthinkable, or to preach in the open, with occasional possibility of being permitted to teach in the home of some convert.

Early in his ministry Jesus realized that for him to be effective in the bringing of the Kingdom into human experience, his teachings must be perpetuated. Some means must be devised whereby the preaching of the gospel would be carried on by those who understood it, and whose practical knowledge would be demonstrated in the works following. Preaching the truth alone would not be sufficient. Works must follow. Therefore, there should be raised up through his own teach-

ing, works, and example, those who would be able, in some measure at least, to carry on the ministry of establishing in the hearts of humanity the Truth which leads to the Kingdom. This could be done only in one way, by the training of a body of students carefully chosen and receptive to his message and thoroughly convinced that he was the Messiah, the Christ, whose message was to redeem the world.

In pursuit of this purpose, Jesus chose as his disciples, for the most part, men of lowly station, but who were sufficiently spiritual-minded to enable them to gain the message, to take part in its dissemination, and to prove its worth by its healing and regenerating works. Before the chosen ones should be sent on their missionary journey, they must be trained both in the letter and spirit of his message and its purpose. They must pass through a period of training. Just how long this period extended does not appear. But when the Master judged that they were prepared, he sent them forth with definite instructions as to their mission and their conduct. His holy purpose was to send these messengers to the people, to the receptive, to convey the good news that God was ever present, available to meet the human need, and that the Kingdom, for entrance to which they would show the way, was at hand. Surely no band was ever sent forth for a higher purpose.

These messengers of good were not at first to attend to the conversion of the Gentiles or Samaritans. The wisdom of this admonition is plain. The Gentiles were pagan, worshiping divers gods, given to forms and rules of worship wholly contradictory to Jesus' concept of the one God, infinite Spirit, to be worshiped not by material sacrifices and formal ceremonies but in "spirit and in truth."¹ As the ancient feud between Israelite and

¹ John 4:23.

Samaritan was still aflame, for the disciples to enter their community could only result in strife and dissension. How wise was this Man of Galilee! How thoroughly informed in the ways of the carnal mind! But his instructions were not wholly negative. He told his pupils where to go, to whom to carry their message—at first only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Again he evidenced his keen knowledge of the human heart. Those lost sheep of Israel had been taught that there was but one God, and however far they might have strayed from their early instructions and faith, the very fact that they had been reared in this faith would make easier the return from their apostasy. They had strayed but could be brought back to the fold again. The return would be easier because of their ancestral background.

When the question as to the type of people to be reached had been settled, the next and perhaps most important instruction would pertain to the character of the teachers' message. What should they tell these straying sheep, these Israelites, lost to their early traditions and worship? Why, the most inspiring of all news, the very heart of Jesus' teachings—"the kingdom of heaven is at hand."² They were to impress upon these apostate Israelites that God's Kingdom, the state of consciousness in which man, the child of God, eternally abides, was indeed at hand and accessible to all who would take the mental steps necessary to enter upon its blessed state.

This was to be accomplished by changing their point of view as to Life and its meaning, as to that which is real. They were to learn how to distinguish between the true and false; to understand that since God is the

² Matthew 10:7.

Father of all, they, too, were of the grand brotherhood eternally blessed of their Father, who is Life and Love. Surely such a message would make strong appeal to the sinful, the sick, and weary, to wanderers in the darkness and despair of old night, in the depth of human misery and woe. This was the good news which, if received with honesty of heart and due humility, would loose the bonds of material bondage and set the captive free.

But this was not all. Results must follow in physical well being. Works were to be wrought, works of healing and regeneration. These trained missionaries would exemplify the practicability of their teachings by their works. There must be signs following as proof that their preaching was true, was, indeed, the Word of God brought to mankind to relieve it of its burden of sin and sickness, of sorrow and want. The instructions were specific: "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils."³ Were ever instructions more specific, more definite? Through their own understanding, through knowledge of God, of His Christ, and man, received from the great Teacher himself, they were to destroy the claims of the flesh expressed in terms of sickness and sin manifested as divers diseases. Not only the least difficult ailments but the most serious, even the dread leprosy, they were to heal in proof of the truth of their preachings.

Leprosy was a common form of disease, difficult to cure through any material remedy. But this fact was not to relieve these trained disciples from their responsibility. They were to heal even this most malignant form of discord. It was no light task which the Master imposed upon these faithful messengers. They were to prove that the training they had received from their

³ Matthew 10:8.

Master was the Way of Life, the way out of material restrictions, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

But the healing of disease, important as that was in proof of the sacred source of their ministry, was not the end but rather an incident of their mission. Through their understanding of Life they were to raise the dead. They were to become so completely conscious that Life, God, was ever present, that the belief of death would vanish before their profound conviction. They were to demonstrate that the belief in death was but a false belief, since it pertained only to the false mortal concept of man and consequently could be destroyed by clear understanding of what Life really was. What Jesus had done, he fully expected his students to repeat. They were to prove their discipleship by their works. No lesser proof would suffice. If Jesus was to leave the responsibility of disseminating and perpetuating his message to his pupils, they must prove the quality of their discipleship.

In further pursuit of their mission they were to "cast out devils."⁴ The connotation of the word "devils" implies the common belief of that time in personified evil, that the divers forms of evil which beset mankind were mental entities which beset and gained entrance to the human mentality, there to abide to the distress and definite harm of the person who so received them. Therefore the Twelve were instructed to rid the receptive thought of these false beliefs, to supplant evil, error, with Truth, spiritual Truth.

The process was not difficult when once its fundamentals were understood. It was simply the supplanting of false belief about man as a mortal, subject to and dominated by evil thoughts (devils), with the truth about

⁴ Matthew 10:8.

man—that he is the child of God, that he had never fallen, and that he never had ceased and never could cease to be that man whom God had created in His own image and likeness. And when this transformation had taken place in the mentality harassed by false beliefs (devils), the result was inevitable—a state of freedom and boundless bliss, of joy and lasting peace. This was the transformation which the Master enjoined upon the disciples to bring about through their own understanding of the Christ, the Son of God.

So freely had Jesus given to these dearest friends the precious message revealed to him of the Father, that they in turn must freely give to others this incomparable Truth. Only through their giving would they demonstrate their true discipleship. Giving freely would by no means impoverish them; rather would it enhance both the quality and the quantity of their spiritual treasure. Furthermore, this very giving would strengthen their faith through increasing their understanding, thus continuously enhancing their preparation for the great work ahead.

The Gospel record of the instruction of the disciples impresses the reader with its completeness. It seems that no detail, no useful instruction, was omitted; that is, instruction in the letter of their ministry. The spirit had been received directly from the Master through their daily companionship with him. By word and deed and the example of his daily life had he imparted the spirit of true ministry. There remained but the impartation of the letter, of the best method to be pursued in carrying forth the glorious news.

These missionaries were to live off the country, as it were. That is, they should take with them no money, neither an extra coat nor a weapon for defense against possible attack. Their works should provide them with

all that they would require in their journey. So profoundly convinced was Jesus that those who would seek "first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness"⁵ would be supplied with every needful thing, with whatever was necessary to their comfort and protection, that he sent them forth barehanded, materially, but clothed in the panoply of that infinite Love which provides God's children with every blessing.

"The labourer is worthy of his hire."⁶ True service insures righteous reward. No higher service could be rendered than that upon which the Twelve were about to depart. Serving the Father, they would be sure of His loving care and protection.

Jesus went into some detail regarding those with whom they should abide during their ministry. They were to determine who in cities they would enter were likely to be receptive to their message. They were to feed the friendly and worthy with the bread of Life, and with them dwell. He even defined the method of approach, instructing them as to what their movement should be when seeking the worthy. If the householder were found to be receptive, he should receive their blessing; if not, it should be withheld. When leaving a house where they were unwelcome or a city that was unfriendly, they were to depart with no misgivings, no resentment. Rather would they dismiss it without blame. But the unreceptive, those who would refuse to hear the glad tidings, choosing to remain in their unregenerate state of thought, those would continue to suffer because of their false beliefs, their clinging to materiality, to the erroneous and ephemeral, from which could be gained no lasting peace.

Jesus was fully aware of the conditions they would

⁵ Matthew 6:33.

⁶ Luke 10:7.

face on their journey. It was to be no holiday. The dangers would be many. The carnal mind would hate and curse, would even attack and destroy. They were not to meet these conditions with the weapons of the carnal mind. They would minister not on its plane, not with its methods, but with the assurance of God's presence and protection. They were to be as "wise as serpents"⁷ in their methods of approach; they were to be as "harmless as doves" in their defense, harmless in the use of material means of protection. They would be armed with more potent weapons, even with the spirit of Truth against which no enemy could prevail. They were to be cautious and aware as to the various claims of evil they would meet, for even in the synagogues and Sanhedrins they would find opposition. They would be haled before political authority, before governors and kings, with charges of their treason. But even this should bring them no dismay, for it would be given them in the time of need precisely what to say. Divine Wisdom would care for them in every particular, for they were in divine service.

That Jesus foresaw the dissension that would follow the revolutionary teachings of the Twelve is plainly evident. Families would be bitterly divided, brother against brother, children against parents, even to the point of causing their death. The disciples whose words would cause this violence and strife would be hated, would often be in danger. From persecution they would flee from one city to another, seeking a mental state most receptive to their message.

There follows in Matthew's Gospel the apocalyptic statement that before they shall have visited all the cities of Israel, the "Son of man" will put in an appearance.

⁷ Matthew 10:16.

Through all this strife and persecution they are to persevere, and, persevering, they will find salvation, the reward of well-doing. And this reward results not from some special bestowal from the Father but is prepared and waiting for all who seek the Kingdom. It is the reward of righteousness for all who exchange a false sense of life and its purposes for the Life which is eternal.

Those who kill the body, who destroy the material sense of life, are not to be feared; but rather to be feared are those who, through false teaching, are able to hold thought in woe and distress, to hold one in a mental state wholly oblivious to the divine Presence and the blessings which belong to the sons of God, that is, those who may destroy the soul. These are to be greatly feared.

The heavenly Father cares for all, even the sparrows. All God's creatures are held in His care. That one who, recognizing the Christ as the Son of God, perceives the truth and accepts it, that one will be recognized by the Father, by the infinite Mind, forever conscious of its own ideas. But refusal to accept the Christ, denial of the divine Omnipotence can have but one result—to shut one off from all recognition by the all-loving Father.

To receive the divine reward, His blessings, one of necessity must gain that state of consciousness in which the Father eternally abides. In that state, God's man is ever held in perfect bliss. The Christ came not to bring peace, that is, peace in the flesh, in material experience. "The sword of the Spirit"⁸ brings peace, lasting peace, "the peace . . . which passeth all understanding"⁹ through transforming thought, exchanging materiality for spirituality, unreality for reality. When once thought is spiritualized, then is realized everlasting peace,

⁸ Ephesians 6:17.

⁹ Philippians 4:7.

peace which may not be invaded by that which is unlike God.

This love of the Christ, Truth, transcends all human relationship. The recognition of the sublime facts of existence supersedes all material experience, all events which occur on the plane of materiality. It is a supreme experience, this gaining of the Christ-consciousness; and while all blessedness may not be acquired until the awakening in His likeness, yet every step taken on the journey will be blessed in the consciousness of man's oneness with the Father.

So explicit was Jesus in his instructions that the way of Life was made perfectly clear. Knowing the cunning and craft of the carnal mind, which the Twelve were to encounter, Jesus left nothing untouched in their preparation. They who received these messengers of Truth received the Christ-message, which they represented and made manifest through their works. Moreover, they who received the Christ also received God, for the Christ is God's holy messenger revealed through the sublimely spiritual mentality of the Master. They who should receive these prophets of the new day would be blessed with the rewards of the righteous. They would gain the Kingdom, the reign of righteousness, precisely in proportion to the degree of their receptivity—no more and no less. The reward was inevitable. The Law of God is the Law of righteousness and justice. Unless reward followed upon righteous service, God's Law of perfection would fail, and the holy mission of these Twelve messengers of the Christ would be nullified.

So complete and withal so definite were the instructions to the Twelve—of such universal application in spreading the teachings of the Master—that the conclusion is justified that they were intended for the direction

of all who should engage in the Christ-ministry throughout all time. In fact, they are as applicable and as potent today as when they first fell from the lips of the mighty Nazarene. They are both timeless and comprehensive. While there is less outward opposition to the teachings of Christianity today than in its beginnings, yet, judging from the violence now manifested in the world, there is as little readiness to make the Christ-way the Way of Life. Yet the conviction grows with those who have accepted it that it is the only way to gain that lasting peace for which all peoples long.

Aware of the crying need for what he had to give to the submerged masses, Jesus soon followed his first missionary enterprise with another. This time he enlarged the number to seventy. To this band he also issued instructions as to the method of procedure to be followed in the ministry which they were about to undertake. They were both to heal and preach. But the instructions as to the type of healing they were to engage in are not so explicit as in the case of the Twelve. But healing as well as preaching had prominent place in their missionary enterprise. That the Kingdom was nigh and available to all who would receive their message and partake of the healing which it made possible, was to be proclaimed wherever they went.

As with the Twelve, these were also to go two by two, presumably for their greater protection and more effective ministry. Intensely interesting would be an account of the reception of these early missionaries and their successes in the holy work to which they were appointed. Unlike the Twelve, the Seventy were not commissioned to the lost children of Israel, but apparently were to take the gospel to Gentile and Jew alike. That their labors bore fruit is seen in the brief report contained in the tenth chapter of Luke.

Back they came with joyous report of success. The devils, that is, false or evil beliefs, had been overcome, cast out, by their spiritual understanding. To this report Jesus made a somewhat cryptic reply. He had seen Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Satan, as Lucifer, was the symbol of personalized evil, and appeared as a lightning stroke falling from the skies. This form of evil, the most destructive natural force, as well as the most illusive, was thus associated even with the prince of evil, Satan himself. When it is recognized that at this time no use was made of electricity, it may well be believed that this agency from the skies was looked upon as the very essence of evil, as evil in its most destructive form.

Jesus then proceeded to bestow upon these missionaries even greater potency in destroying the enemies of mankind. Of necessity, the disciples' ability to overcome divers forms of evil with which poor humanity was harassed was enhanced both by increased faith in and greater understanding of the Christ, Truth. Furthermore, they had gained substantial proof of the potency of this Truth in their experience in healing and regenerating during their missionary enterprise.

Now they were prepared to meet and destroy the most violent, the most deadly forms of evil, the poisonous bites of scorpions and serpents; in short, they were now able to overcome every form of error, of false belief, in whatsoever form manifested. And in this utilization of spiritual authority they would be immune from any harm. They were so panoplied in the infinite Love in whose ministry they were engaged that they could not be injured.

But neither the privilege of this ministry nor the power to overcome evil was the cause for their deepest rejoicing. Rather should they rejoice that they had gained

that spiritual understanding whereby they had entered the Kingdom; and it was this exalted state of consciousness that had revealed to them the true abiding place of the children of God, "the house of many mansions,"¹⁰ in which was no phase of error. For this reason, in the picturesque language of the times, their names were "written in heaven."¹¹ No less in the present than in the long past are the names of those written in heaven who have gained the Kingdom through turning from the lure of the physical sense, from the world of unreality, to gain the spiritual vision, understanding of God and His universe of perfection, where the children of God forever dwell in peace and fadeless joy.

That Jesus fully realized that certain of his chosen band were more receptive to the Christ-message than others is plainly apparent. Those who most readily gave up a material sense of life and its expression were best prepared to lay hold of the spiritual truth. Of the Twelve, three—Peter, James, and John—were recognized by the Master as more spiritually prepared than were the others. On three outstanding occasions this was manifest, three occasions when the Master rose to an exalted state of consciousness to which none of his disciples had attained. Those who had most nearly approximated this state were the three named.

The account of the transfiguration which appears in the three Synoptics has been one of the most difficult for scholars to explain. In the Gospel of Luke it has its place directly following the interview during which Jesus demanded to know who his disciples considered him to be—the request which elicited from Peter that most important declaration. Eight days after this event, as the narrative runs, Jesus, taking with him Peter, James,

¹⁰ John 14:2.

¹¹ Luke 10:20.

and John, went up on a high mountain to pray. While formerly the Mount of Transfiguration was believed to have been Tabor, to the east of Nazareth, it is now generally accepted that Mt. Hermon, to the north of Galilee, in the anti-Lebanon range, was the scene of this transcendental experience.

As Jesus prayed, his face took on an unfamiliar appearance and his garments were radiant with light, were "white and glistening."¹² Then appeared two prophets of olden time, even Moses and Elias, two who had been held in highest remembrance by the people whom they had served so faithfully and in such important ways. These two appeared "in glory" and discussed with the Master the events which were to follow in Jerusalem, even his crucifixion.

Luke's account records that the three disciples who were with Jesus had fallen asleep during his prayer, but upon awakening beheld the two men who had appeared to the Master. Matthew and Mark omit this statement. Peter, apparently amazed and confused by the experience, proposed that three tabernacles should be erected, one for the Master and one each for Moses and Elias. Thereupon a cloud appeared which encompassed them, and a voice spoke from the cloud, "This is my beloved Son: hear him."¹³ The two prophets disappeared, and Jesus was again alone with the three disciples. Matthew records that when the disciples heard the voice from the cloud, they were afraid and fell on their faces, but were reassured when Jesus came and touched them.

As they descended from the mount, the Master requested that they should not tell of the experience until after his resurrection. When the disciples asked him why the scribes say that Elias must first come, Jesus re-

¹² Luke 9:29.

¹³ Luke 9:35.

plied that "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things."¹⁴ And he asserted that Elias had already come but had not been received at his true worth, and that the fate—violent death—which had happened to John the Baptist should also happen to him. Thus plainly did the Master foretell his own experience on the Cross. Following the descent from the mountain, Jesus healed the lunatic boy.

The Gospel accounts of this holy experience indicate that Peter and the others failed to understand the spiritual significance of the transfiguration. It seems probable that the writer of this narrative undertook to find in it an analogy to some older accounts, especially to the experience of Moses on Sinai, when God spoke from a cloud. Only from the standpoint of spiritual understanding can this experience be understood. Christ Jesus, in a moment of supreme exaltation attained through prayer, had gained a state of consciousness so far above his ordinary state, exalted as that was, that not only did his face glow with spiritual light but even his clothing became luminous.

In this sublime mental state there appeared those who had attained to a high state of consciousness, the personalities known as Moses and Elias, the Lawgiver and the Prophet; and even the disciples, Peter and the others, reflecting the Master's exaltation, shared temporarily his transcendent experience. Thus the transfiguration becomes a problem of exalted consciousness, an experience to be entered upon by the spiritually minded when lifted by the agency of prayer far above their customary mental state.

Many a follower of the Master, in times of spiritual exaltation, has reflected light from on high, the light that

¹⁴ Matthew 17:11.

shines for mortals only when the sense of mortality is superseded by the understanding that Life is God, eternal and ever present, that man as God's expression, as His image and likeness, is forever manifesting the divine nature. The gaining of this understanding indeed transforms the countenance, even makes radiant the garments. Those who are party to this rare but wholly natural experience—natural, that is, divinely natural, for it is the expression of God's Law—gain a foretaste of heaven itself; for heaven is that state of consciousness from which all materiality has disappeared into its native state of nothingness.

Another incident plainly indicates Jesus' attitude toward the three disciples, Peter, James, and John. And so far as one may determine the chronology of events from the Gospels, it occurred prior to the experience on the mount. When Jesus was on the farther, that is, the eastern, shore of Galilee, there came a ruler of the synagogue, Jairus by name, begging the Master to come and heal his daughter, who was very ill. Jesus, impressed by the man's faith, went with him, the two being accompanied by a great throng.

Then occurred an incident which has occasioned much discussion. A woman who, it appears, had suffered from an issue of blood for many years and had spent all her substance in seeking relief from physicians but had only grown worse had heard of the marvelous healings brought about by the Nazarene and was prompted to seek help from him. So great was her faith that she believed that by merely touching his clothing she would be made free. This she did, and was instantaneously healed. Jesus, aware that his thought had reached some seeker for relief from suffering, inquired, "Who touched my clothes?"¹⁵ To this someone replied that in such

¹⁵ Mark 5:30.

a crowd it was difficult to say who had touched him. But Jesus looked about, knowing what had happened. The woman, in fear and trembling and aware of her healing, came and confessed. Jesus replied in his accustomed tone of compassion and understanding, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague." ¹⁶

Meantime, someone came from Jairus' house with the information that the daughter had died. Apparently to protect the Master from further obligation in the matter, some said that as the girl had died, why trouble him further? When Jesus heard this, he said to the father, "Be not afraid, only believe." ¹⁷ Then, dismissing all his disciples save Peter, James, and John, he went with them into the ruler's house. A great multitude had gathered, mourning for the girl. When Jesus inquired why they wept, since the girl was not dead, they laughed at him. Then he sent them all out, and, with the parents and the three disciples, he went to the room where the girl lay. Taking her by the hand, he said in Aramaic, "Talitha cumi," that is, "Damsel, arise." ¹⁸ Immediately the girl sat up, arose, and walked. Jesus told the parents to feed the girl.

It is little wonder that there was "great astonishment" ¹⁹ among the multitude which had little or no understanding of the real Life, the Life which is God, the Life which all the children of God express eternally. Here again were the three disciples privileged to be present and observe a demonstration of spiritual power, the power which inevitably accompanies the understanding of God as eternal Life, as present and potently available

¹⁶ Mark 5:34.

¹⁷ Mark 5:36.

¹⁸ Mark 5:41.

¹⁹ Mark 5:42.

to destroy the illusion of death no less than the illusion of sickness. How completely did Jesus prove that the Christ, the Holy Ghost and Comforter, is the Healer of mankind's every ill, of every false belief regarding Life and its expression!

The high estimation in which Jesus held the three, Peter, James, and John, found another exemplification on that fateful night in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus had partaken of the Last Supper with his disciples. Judas was aware that the Master knew of the dastardly part he was to have in the pending tragedy, and, to fulfill his obligation, had gone out. Following the most precious and poignant teachings of the Master to his little flock, the Eleven with Jesus had departed for Olivet. Again taking the three, Jesus withdrew from the others to engage in that prayer which was to prepare him for the terrible ordeal ahead. It seems beyond explanation that these three whom Jesus had so greatly favored, that these who were most aware of the message and mission of the Master, should in this hour of greatest mental distress have gone to sleep. One Gospel (Luke 22:4), however, attributes their somnolence to sorrow—sorrow, perhaps, for the pending events which they foresaw, which meant their separation forever from their beloved Teacher.

This experience seems but another striking example of the reluctance of the carnal mind to leave its moorings, its belief in life and intelligence in matter, sufficiently to attain the spiritual sense of Life and its expression, to lay hold of spiritual Truth, for such attainment requires the abandonment of matter, with its lures, its insistent demands, its beliefs of sensuous pleasure and well-being. Surely, Peter and James and John, although having been long in the company of the Master, having heard his precious message proclaimed in Judea and Galilee, hav-

ing witnessed the mighty works—the healing of sickness of the most virulent kind, the regeneration of the sinful, even the raising of the dead—having been present at the most exalted experiences of the Master's ministry, having been blessed in greater degree by these privileges than any other three persons who have ever lived, surely, that they so failed to gain the spiritual import of Jesus' mission is but a startling proof of the tenacity of material belief, of the claim that a mortal is man, is in fact God's image and likeness.

It took the experience of the Cross with its glorious victory of the resurrection and ascension to awaken these beloved disciples to the true significance of the advent of the Christ. However, that the Christ had appeared in the flesh and had dwelt among them, when fully realized, aroused them to the faithful and potent discipleship which followed.

Impulsive Peter gloriously redeemed himself. James had part in the early missionary work, and John, in his advanced age, ripened through many years of contemplation of what he had seen and heard, made wise from long service in the cause of spreading the gospel to all men of good will, consummated his career as author of the most appealing, the most transcendently potent of all the Gospels. All paid in priceless service for their glorious privilege of companioning with Christ Jesus, Son of God.

XXI

Jesus' Relation to Society

JESUS centered his plan for redemption about the individual. He taught that the Kingdom was to be established on earth even as it was forever established in heaven. Thus the social order was to be redeemed. In the coming of the Kingdom, he saw the reign of righteousness which would furnish the complete remedy for the social evils so manifest about him. The condition of the masses—their poverty, their misery, their hopelessness, their enslaved condition—was the direct result of two causes: acceptance of the rule of a dishonest and hypocritical government, dominated by a ritualistic religion which, in the observance of its ancient rites, had lost the true spirit of religion; and the overlordship of Rome, a type of authority as nearly devoid of humane instincts as a distant overlord could be.

Jesus saw this situation and its servile acceptance by the masses as the political set-up of the times. As there appeared little possibility of improving it from above, that is, from the dominant classes, the only hope lay in the redemption of the masses, for the poor and humble, the downtrodden and abused, were much more likely to accept the doctrine of the Kingdom than the haughty and arrogant, who occupied the seats of authority. This conclusion was justified by the receptivity of the masses to his teachings, by the eagerness with which they listened to his words, and by their following of him from place to place.

As society was made up of individuals, the social order

would be changed when the units which comprised it were changed. Reformation and regeneration must first take place with the individual. Then the new order, given effect by the new vision, the new sense of righteousness and justice for all, which the coming of the Kingdom insures, would follow.

Jesus did not refuse to obey the law of the day, but rather he taught obedience to authority. Indication of this attitude is gained from the payment of the Temple tax in Capernaum. When Peter was asked by the collector of taxes if his Master paid this tax, he replied that he did. Peter came and told Jesus of the incident, and the latter asked him whether this tax was collected from strangers or the sons of the authorities. Peter replied that strangers paid it. Thereupon Jesus directed him to resort to his accustomed trade, that of a fisherman, in order to obtain the money to pay the tax. Peter obeyed, and in the mouth of the first fish taken found a piece of money which met the need. The tax was paid. Thus did Jesus evidence his readiness to obey the law.

Similar, as we have seen, was his reply to the Herodians and Pharisees, who tried to entrap him into some denial of authority which might be used against him. He told them plainly that to Caesar should be rendered the things that belong to Caesar, that is, to respect the temporal authority even though one might disagree with the source from which that authority came and the method of its exercise.

This incident occurred near the end of his ministry when the hatred against him had become intense. Paying the tax was regarded as disloyalty to the divine authority established by the Jewish law. Refusal to pay it set one in direct opposition to the Roman rule. Hence the dilemma into which the cunning questioners sought to plunge the Master. His answer proposed the only

practical solution. Pay to the constituted authority what the law demanded. But render unto God the homage and obedience due Him. He discriminated carefully between the two, and in so doing escaped the uncomfortable situation into which they tried to thrust him.

While Jesus' interest was, as we have seen, ever centered in establishing the Kingdom, yet his sense of justice required that he pay Rome what was due for the exercise of her authority. He was a good citizen of the earth while undertaking to establish the heavenly state. He strove to bring about a better social order, not through revolution, not through stirring the masses to revolt, but rather through the lifting of the moral and spiritual status of the people to that height where they would voluntarily become the exponents of social righteousness and justice, wherein honesty would supplant dishonesty in government, and the poor would be permitted to share equally with the rich in the bounties of nature. That he was firmly set against promoting a political revolution was proved time and again as he neared his final ordeal. The desired end was to be brought out not through political incitement to the use of material might in righting the wrongs of society, but through the gentle operation of Love's messenger, the Christ, Truth. Jesus did not deny the authority of the Old Testament, with which he was so familiar. Often did he say "It has been said of old time" and proceed with the words "but I say unto you," to elaborate and interpret some ancient saying from his spiritualized concept of God and the universe. As he had a clear understanding of Deity and the divine economy as well as of the brotherhood of man, his keen desire was to order human affairs in accord with divine Will.

Jesus knew that the peace for which humanity so

poignantly sought was not based upon mere political agreement but rather upon establishment of the Kingdom. The sword which he declared he came to bring was "the sword of the Spirit";¹ and that same Truth which he had told the disciples would set them free from physical bondage would also right civic wrongs. Not through war, the use of military might, but only through the transformation of thought from a material to a spiritual basis could lasting peace and justice be acquired. And Jesus well knew that the carnal mind, with its greed, selfishness, self-will, lust, love of power, which so generally characterized the authorities of the time, whether the Jewish hierarchy or the Roman overlords, would resent to the bitter end the authority of the oncoming Christ.

How completely do the conclusions of the Master find parallel in the conditions which face the world today! In the seats of authority of many nations sit those actuated by the same types of mortal mind which the Master faced in his day. The carnal mind does not change. It merely finds new forms of expression, new instrumentalities by which to work its will. After nineteen hundred years of effort to bring the Golden Rule into the social order, there is little evidence in national policies of its success in any considerable measure. To be sure, there are many evangelized individuals throughout the world who have found the Christ and have gained thereby peace and the right sense of service. But this Christ-spirit, although manifested in many individuals, has never gained entrance to the halls of State to the extent of establishing the divine rule as the law of the land. Nations are still mired in the depths of selfishness. Governments hold to nationalism, to the very mental states which

¹ Ephesians 6:17.

Jesus so plainly taught are bars to true progress. They fear to take the steps which lead to freedom and the great brotherhood of man. They fear to lose something of national prestige; fear that the people will lose something of value unless the barrier of self-interest be kept high and firm. Nevertheless, salvation for the nations will come precisely after the manner of its coming into individual consciousness. The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

In *Jesus' Principles of Living*, Professor Kent points out that the words translated "King" and "Kingdom" are derived from a root which means "to counsel"; he holds that these translations are misleading, and that "Democracy" is a much more literal translation of the original Hebrew and Aramaic words commonly rendered "Kingdom." There can be little doubt that this meaning more nearly represents Jesus' concept of the true state and the sincerest hope of the masses for a new order as well. When the individual has become sufficiently evangelized to make the doing of God's Will his chief aim and purpose, then true Democracy will be established, for all will then share equally in making practical the divine ordinance.

This conclusion utterly refutes the notion held by certain commentators that Jesus' purpose was to establish a personal rule, with himself as king. His every act was against it; his abrupt refusal to entertain such an idea was apparent on several occasions. While it was openly the purpose of the fiery Zelotes to overthrow the Roman rule in order to re-establish a kingdom after the manner of the rule of David's day, yet this in no particular conformed to the purpose of the Nazarene. His purpose was to establish the rule of divine Love, the reign of righteousness.

As we have seen, Jesus' plan was to regenerate the

individual and through that accomplishment to reform society. Even a small community of spiritually minded individuals would spread its influence to the larger unit, and thus the leaven would carry from unit to unit until the state itself would be manifesting the rule of God. This would insure the safety of the individual and give opportunity to each to serve God in his own way, thus promoting his own salvation.

In a compelling parable recorded by Matthew, Jesus points out the basis of this personal transformation which makes of the individual a citizen of the true, the divine State. The Son of man will gather before him all nations; they shall be divided, the sheep (the worthy) on the right hand, the goats (the unworthy) on the left. Then the King will invite the sheep, blessed of the Father, to inherit the Kingdom that has been prepared for them from the beginning. They are the chosen of God because of their good deeds to men. "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me."² The righteous, astonished at this assertion, asked when it was that they had done to the Father all these acts of kindness and mercy. To their questionings, the King replied that inasmuch as they had done it to one of the least of his brethren, they had indeed done it unto him.

How accurately does this parable point the manner of true service to God, the perfect way of serving Him, of doing His Will, of establishing His reign, the true Democracy! But the King denounces the goats, the unworthy, in severe terms. They who have loved selfishly,

² Matthew 25:35, 36.

who have failed entirely in acts of kindness and mercy, and have accordingly failed to serve God by righteous service to humanity, they are relegated to the state of the mortal or carnal mind in which abide despair, misery, and all the woes commonly characterized as "hell" or "hell fire." These carnally minded have failed to gain the spiritual state and accordingly have had no part in establishing on earth the true Democracy wherein the Will of God, of infinite Good, holds sway.

But redemption is for all. God's children forever abide in the Kingdom. As mortals gain the understanding that spiritual man, their true selfhood, is the child of God, they put off the old man, the false material sense of man, and put on the new. Mortals have always before them the privilege of choice between God and evil, between this Democracy of Love and the prison rule of the carnal mind. Whenever they are ready to seek good and serve it, the gates of Heaven swing wide for their entrance. The Father's arms are always extended to the lost sheep, to the prodigal, who, having mistakenly wandered amid the fleshpots of Egypt, has turned back toward man's true abiding place, the house of many mansions, of enough to maintain in complete blessedness every one of the Father's infinite brotherhood.

Whoever interprets the parable of the sheep and the goats aright finds in much of the charitable work of the present day the counterpart of the good deeds which the King had seen the chosen do. In this enumeration of deeds of kindness and mercy, Jesus clearly set forth the social activities which constitute true service, service to God through deeds of loving-kindness to the needy, the little ones of earth. In this new order conceived by Jesus there was no room for antisocial selfishness, no justification for withdrawing into the cell of seclusion. But sal-

vation, the gaining of the Kingdom, was to be worked out by unselfish deeds, by succor of those less fortunate, still wandering in the uncertain paths of the carnal mind.

The Messiah which Jesus came to be was far, very far, from the old Jewish concept of one who was to establish a worldly kingdom in which the chosen should glory in autocratic pride, a kingdom wherein their enemies would be punished and the chosen rewarded. This type of rule had no place in the concept and purpose of the Master. In fact, the Kingdom which he foresaw and declared to be ever present, just at hand, was the state of consciousness in which Love was the ruler, and in which all should rejoice in the divine Presence.

In the practical application of this concept, Jesus saw as righteous that which truly benefited the community; as unrighteous, that which injured it. In this ideal state which he conceived, the rule of Love is for the benefit of the individual, for Love bases all individuality. This condition precisely controverts the notion widely prevalent today that the state is all-important, and that the individual exists for the state, a theory which demolishes the fundamental idea of true Democracy.

No better illustration of the spirit of true brotherliness, of righteous Democracy, is found in the New Testament than the parable of the Good Samaritan related by Luke. Jesus' disapproval of the Pharisees and scribes, especially of the priestly group, is here set forth with telling effect. It exposes to the clear light of day the conditions which then existed in the priesthood and upper strata of society.

The spirit exhibited by the Samaritan contrasts strikingly with the attitude of smugness and irresponsibility of those merciless men who refused aid to the injured. The code of their profession was in no degree manifest. Cold abstinence from a deed of mercy which might in-

volve personal sacrifice was the position of the heartless Levite. But the Samaritan, he of a despised race, a group which had been ostracized, even abhorred by the ritualistic Jew, he it was who fulfilled the code of service which opens the door of the Kingdom, even the highest commendation of the King. This code wins a place in the true Democracy ruled by the Love that never fails in its perfect deeds of mercy and charity. It was this type of social service which Jesus constantly presented and commended. He knew it to be the only means whereby God's Will could be established in the hearts of men. And the need is no less manifest, the method no less imperative today than when the great Teacher gave his all to promote its establishment among the masses of his own time. Many who pray "Thy will be done" are often far from prepared to submit to the divine rule.

The extremely materialistic view of the Kingdom to be established by the Messiah, that it was primarily to bless only a particular race, chosen of God to possess divine glory and exercise special power, was not held uniformly by the Jews in Jesus' time. The educated, and probably a considerable portion of the Jewish race, held a more spiritual concept of the restoration. Not alone by the authority and exercise of material power was it to be established, but rather by some miraculous means. With this concept, however, was mingled the notion that the heathen people would be subjugated or destroyed and the reign of God be limited to the Hebrew race.

It seems that the words of the Psalmist, promising joy and salvation to all the righteous, had fallen from memory, had lost their meaning, and that the promises revealed by God to Isaiah and Jeremiah, to Micah and the others were quite forgotten. But not so with Jesus. He foresaw the Kingdom of God as a universal Democracy, prepared and waiting for the Gentile no less than the

Jew. It was the righteous of all nations who were assembled in the parable quoted. None was excluded who had fulfilled the criterion of righteous service. Neither nationality nor race, but the mental state and deeds done were the test of fitness for the Kingdom. This precluded the possibility of one race alone being blessed of the Father, of one race alone becoming the children of God. This divine state was universal, is for all.

The incident of the healing of the daughter of the Syrophenician woman is a case in point. To her first appeal Jesus made no reply, and the disciples, zealous as ever for the protection of their Teacher from impostors, begged him to send her away. His reply, that he was sent but to the lost sheep of Israel, has apparently a touch of irony. The disciples were thinking only in terms of salvation of the Jews. Therefore they would not wish him to heal an outsider, a heathen who was a Greek. As the woman persisted, Jesus thought to test her faith. The children's bread was not to be cast to the dogs—spiritual truth was not for the unworthy—still pursuing the idea he had expressed to the disciples. But the woman's reply quite convinced him of her faith, of her perfect confidence that her daughter could be healed through spiritual means. That the daughter was made whole immediately is positive proof that Jesus saw that God's grace fell upon all who were proved worthy, all who had faith in and trusted God.

The query which may arise regarding the limited ministry to which the Twelve were accredited when sent on their missionary journey may be answered by the Master's belief that the lost sheep of the house of Israel would be more susceptible to the teachings to be presented than non-Jews. At any rate, his later teachings and deeds proved beyond possibility of refutation that the salva-

tion he finally sought to establish was universal, without discrimination as to race or nation. Proof of this is found in Matthew 12, where Jesus is represented as quoting from the familiar words of Isaiah. "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment [proclaim religion] to the Gentiles. . . . And in his name shall the Gentiles trust."³ There could scarcely be better evidence of Jesus' attitude as to the universality of his mission than his acceptance of the prophet's words that the Gentiles were to be reached through his message.

Moreover, there is no evidence, according to the Gospel record, that in healing the multitude, as he frequently did, he discriminated as to the nationality of the healed. And in that multitude were many from near-by territories, which were peopled by others than the Hebrew race. The divine state was not only an everlasting Kingdom, permanent and eternal, but it was for all who would prepare themselves for citizenship therein. This preparation was a spiritual experience from which none was excluded.

That the early missionaries took this view is certain. The churches established in Asia Minor, while largely made up of converts to Christianity from Judaism, were nevertheless established in "heathen," that is, Gentile territory. This concept of the universality of the Christ-message took Paul far afield. It has continued to take missionaries to the uttermost parts of the earth. The true brotherhood, the union of all God's children, knows neither color, race, nor social status. The one test is the willingness to surrender self-will, all unlike divine Love, as the little child, and to accept the divine do-

³ Matthew 12:18, 21 (Moffatt's Translation).

minion. The Master clearly illustrated this when he declared that the Kingdom of Heaven was made up of little children, "of ones like these."

That Jesus did not attempt to define the reign of God does not imply that he had the slightest doubt as to its nature. Wise Teacher that he was, he left it to his listeners often to interpret his teachings and to make practical application of his incisive illustrations. He left no doubt, however, as to his purpose. He often chose to hold his concept in the abstract rather than to give it definition in the concrete.

The purely democratic concept of the Kingdom is described in two parables, found in Luke 14. When giving a dinner or supper, invite not as your guests relatives or rich neighbors, for such invitations presuppose a return invitation from the guests. The expectation of such return of favors precludes the possibility of receiving the true benefits from giving a feast. Rather, call the needy, the injured, the lame, and the blind. Why these? Because they cannot return the compliment, and the giver of the feast will receive the reward of true charity, the privilege of helping those in need to partake of better things. Thus was the point driven home that the blessings of God are for the humble and needy, and when one serves these, the spiritual state is opened to the giver.

An even more telling lesson is set forth in the following verses of Luke's Gospel containing the parable of the Great Supper. A man prepared a great feast to which many were invited; and when the preparations were complete, word of the feast was sent out to the desired guests. But the invited did not respond. Various excuses were given: one had bought a piece of land which he must inspect; another had bought cattle and had to look after the title; still another had married and

could not leave his newlywed wife. All had what to them seemed logical reasons for refusing to accept the proffered hospitality. When the servant who had heard these excuses reported them to his master, the latter was angry, and, rather than have his elaborate feast go for naught, sent his servant into the streets to invite everyone—the poor and halt and blind. But even this did not fill all places at the feast. Then the master ordered that the people in the byways be compelled to come, that his house might be filled. And the master added, “For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.”⁴

Those especially invited to the feast were those before whom special opportunities had been placed, yet they refused, electing to continue in the ways of human experience, the ways in which they were engrossed—self-interest, private gain, and material pleasure. Such were not ready for the feast, not interested in gaining citizenship in the great Democracy. Blind they were to the vision of spiritual blessedness. But the poor, the physically underprivileged, the incapacitated, compelled by their condition to look for relief, were taken to the feast. They it was who, disillusioned through sorrow, disappointment, and suffering, were ready for the spiritual feast prepared by the all-loving Father for all His children. They it was who, having despaired of gaining peace and harmony from the material experience of life, were prepared to enter the gate to the divine Life, even though that gate be strait and narrow: strait, in the necessity for walking in the Way of Spirit; narrow, because of the demands of Spirit to part with the ways of the flesh; but broad unto limitless joy when once entered upon.

⁴ Luke 14:24.

By contrast, to the carnal mind the offerings of the physical senses are without limit. The sensuous pleasures, joy in acquisition of material things, the satisfaction in possession, all these constitute the broad way. But the end of that way is destruction, defeat, despair, depression—when once it is realized that these allurements have no basis in reality, that they constitute the temporal things, seen but unreal. Moreover, the strait and narrow way leads to the Kingdom, the reign of eternal joy, to the life without beginning and without end, for man is eternal, he coexists with God.

In the Christ, Jesus' spiritual selfhood, which he declared to have existed even before the material creation, "before the world was,"⁵ man likewise has his spiritual being, which, made in God's likeness, is both perfect and eternal. This spiritual selfhood, the real man, is always and forever a citizen of the true State, of the spiritual Democracy. This is God's endowment which can never be recalled, can never be annulled. It is the divine gift of perfect being which God bestows upon all. However long mortals may persist in the material ways of life, the fact remains that the spiritual selfhood of everyone is secure in that blessed state, presided over by the Love which never changes and which never fails to bless in ways beyond the possibility of human comprehension.

As mortals catch glimpses of this transcendental blessedness, and turn from their material sense of life and its environment, the way grows brighter; joys multiply, the joys that are permanent because springing from spiritual reality. This is the spiritual state, the great Feast to which the Master invited all humanity. That so few have chosen to accept his gracious invitation

⁵ John 17:5.

lessens not at all its significance and importance. The Feast is still waiting, is forever prepared for all who are ready to leave their land and cattle and all materiality for the spiritual, the true Kingdom, the divine state.

XXII

Prayer and Worship

JESUS was ever striving to convey to his disciples, and to all who would receive his message, the truth about reality, about God, His Christ, and man. It was of first importance for all to understand the divine Father, and that as children of God we all have one Father. In this knowledge, and in this alone, would His Kingdom come "in earth, as it is in heaven."¹ To bring the individual into this understanding, to enable him to grasp his own selfhood as the child of God and to realize the true relationship between God and man, prayer and worship were the necessary means, the process of salvation, the Way of Life.

To be effective, prayer must be righteous, an honest, humble, earnest protestation of God's presence and power and of the perfection of His handiwork. Utterly deprecating the long-established custom of appeasing God through material sacrifices and burnt offerings, Jesus pointed the true manner of worship and the precise form of righteous prayer. Not through vain protests, neither swearing by heaven, which is the divine state of consciousness, nor by the earth, which at most is God's footstool, nor by the Holy City, nor by the head, for over these the carnal mind has no control. But briefly, without lengthy verbiage, are true prayers uttered. Yea, Yea, and Nay, Nay, is the language of prayer; that is, by affirmation of God's presence, goodness, and allness,

¹ Matthew 6:10.

and by the denial of the reality, power, or presence of evil. This is the true method of prayer.

In great detail did Jesus describe and define true worship. True prayer is not made to impress those who might hear. That is the method of the hypocrites, who love to pray publicly, in the synagogue and on street corners, to insure that they shall be observed. They have their reward, to be sure, but it is not the reward of true humility, of a consciousness of the divine Presence, and deeper assurance of man's well-being. Rather the reward is, perhaps, the approval of the multitude, of those who are like minded and have not the true sense of worship. Per contra, when one prays righteously, he goes into his closet; that is, into a private place, and, having shut the door of his consciousness against the intrusion of the physical senses, he prays to his Father in secret. And, moreover, since the divine Father has already bestowed upon His children every blessing, through the recognition of this fact, through positive, unshakable conviction of this, the reward of righteous prayer is realized. This type of prayer consists not of vain repetitions, uttered with the hope of gaining divine approval for much speaking. It is the profound realization that God's blessing is ever available to meet the human need.

And the Master, desirous that the disciples should know precisely the proper method of prayer, follows with what has come to be known as the Lord's Prayer, the acme of true prayer and worship. Its comprehensiveness is unparalleled in the same number of words. Its form is perfect, since it both petitions and affirms. Our Father, God, is in heaven, His eternal abiding place. There He is to be adored, hallowed, worshiped. May His Kingdom come, assurance of His presence abide in

consciousness. That God's Will may govern the motives and acts of men is the essence of true prayer; not in some far-off distant time or in some remote place may His presence be manifest; and the divine Will is manifest only as human purpose and motive and acts are directed to the gaining of the Kingdom. God's Will is done in earth just so far as mortals conform to true service to mankind, unselfish service to help one's neighbor and all humanity into a better, more spiritual state of thinking and living.

The daily bread for which petition is made is the spiritual truth, the bread of life of which Jesus was so desirous that his disciples should partake. It is indeed the divine grace which is all-sufficient. In order to receive the divine grace, to partake of the true bread, forgiveness of our every debtor must be accomplished. Forgive as we have forgiven our debtors. Sure it is that the mental state of resentment, hatred, malice, envy is obstructive to the reception of the heavenly blessing, the gaining of which is the purpose of true prayer. Our debtors forgiven, then the mental state is receptive of the healing love which soothes, comforts, and blesses. Surely the all-loving Father never leads His children into temptation, never places before them the possibility of choosing a wrong and evil course. His children invariably walk in the way of righteousness, and, so walking, are never in the way of temptation. Mortals are freed from the lure of temptation as they realize this great truth.

The closing sentence of this prayer lifts thought to the recognition of God's supremacy. To Him belongs all that is great and glorious, all that is true and permanent. Recognition of this cannot fail to lessen, even destroy, the hold which the physical senses seem to have over mortals; to lift thought out of all sense of the ma-

terial universe as the real universe into a full recognition of God's allness and goodness. Surely this is the prayer incomparable for its practical value, its healing efficacy, its comforting assurance. That Christendom has accepted it as the universal petition to the Father bespeaks its universal appeal.

In many and divers parables the Master emphasized the importance of petitioning the Father, of persistence in prayer, of faith that righteous prayer is answered. Luke records an outstanding parable illustrating the necessity for consistent persistence in petition to God. Immediately following his instructions as to how to pray, as to the manner of true prayer, Jesus illustrates his meaning by a parable. If a man goes at midnight to a friend to borrow three loaves because a traveler has come who is without bread, and if the friend from within his house tells him to go away as he doesn't want to be bothered, that he and his children are in bed and cannot be disturbed, yet, if the request be repeated, its very importunity will eventually cause the householder to rise and give the petitioner all he needs. Mortals who diligently seek to know God, and to understand the spiritual status of man, will gain the blessing which the heavenly Father bestows upon His children. Seeking alone, however persistently, does not influence God to do more than He has already done. But it lifts the seeker into a mental state of receptivity.

Jesus follows with explicit instructions: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."² If a son ask bread of an earthly father, he will not receive a stone, or a scorpion, but that which will meet his need. If this be true of an earthly parent, how much more is it true of

² Matthew 7:7.

the heavenly Father, whose capacity for blessing His children is infinite! This gift of God is of the Holy Spirit, it is the Christ, Truth, through which divine Love meets every need of humanity, supplies every needful thing.

Recognizing as he did the priceless value of true prayer as the means of gaining the Kingdom, Jesus again and again brought to bear some striking parable to emphasize his teaching as to the necessity for mortals' constant dependence upon God. Luke records again the result of constantly and continuously asking the Father for the needful things. A selfish and godless judge was besought by a widow to use his good offices to free her from persecution. For a time he turned coldly away from her pleading, consoling himself that he feared neither God nor man. As neither could harm him, there was no reason to be bothered with this kind of case, in which there probably was neither material reward nor increased prestige. How perfectly this judge illustrates those who, having attained some degree of prominence, some measure of wealth, assume a complacent attitude, believing they are secure in all directions. They will not be bothered. But even this judge, desirous of ending the widow's importunity, finally yields and settles her difficulties. Her prayers finally prevail.

Skillfully does the Master apply his parable. If this judge could be made to yield, to be just because of much asking, shall not God render justice to His own who in their tribulation seek Him day and night? To be sure, He will answer their cries, will avenge their wrongs. Yet in spite of all this assurance that God is at hand to solve all the problems, when the Son of man comes, does he find faith in God? Jesus apparently speaks from the heart something of his deep disappointment

at the apathy of mortals, that poor humanity, burdened to the point of despair, yet will not seek release through the divine Providence, always ready to meet their need.

Immediately following, Luke records another parable, pointing a somewhat dissimilar lesson as to righteous and unrighteous prayer. This time it is a Pharisee and a publican, examples of the learned and haughty lawyer and the despised publican, one of the lowest rank, one of the *hoi polloi*, one from the poorest stratum of society as then organized. The Pharisee stands and utters the accustomed prayer, which perfectly illustrates his mental state. He thanks God for his own self-righteousness: he is not as other men, as the sinners who graft from the people, who commit adultery, who are unjust in their dealings; he is not even like this poor publican. "In obedience to the ritual, I fast twice a week, give tithes to the temple from all my possessions."³ Accordingly, he argues that he has earned divine consideration. Not so, the publican. In a remote place, where he is unlikely to be seen, with eyes cast down, even smiting his breast in token of his humility, he earnestly petitions God's forgiveness for the sins of which he is all too conscious.

Jesus draws the lesson that the publican, praying righteously, with due humility, will be forgiven. He who would exalt himself may not successfully petition the source of all grace. It is the humble petitioner who becomes conscious of the divine Presence, receives the blessing for which he asks, and gains the sense of pardon for the sins he sees as no part of God's plan for man. Repeatedly, also, did Jesus emphasize the need for faith if prayer is to be successful. This faith, as the term was used, manifestly was not blind faith, that is, faith

³ See Luke 18:12 (Moffatt's, Translation).

which had no basis of understanding, but rather the faith which results from knowledge of God, of His infinite presence, in fact, of Him as the omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient Being, the Source of all true existence, of all reality. Faith based upon this conviction turns to God with the assurance that prayer will be answered.

Affirmation that God has already blessed each of His children beyond the possibility of human comprehension, that these blessings are available everywhere and to every mortal who seeks them righteously, is the most active incentive to constant prayer. The gaining and maintenance of this mental attitude has the glorious result of a definite consciousness of the divine Presence and of the well-being of each of His offspring.

The importance which Jesus attached to prayer is manifest throughout the Gospels. He found in prayer the spiritual refreshment, heartening, and strength which enabled him to go forward with the work of his ministry, often in the face of odds that would have appalled and defeated one who was not in constant touch with the Source of his being. He depended upon prayer as the unfailing source of inspiration and strength. When he was threatened with unwanted popularity, when about to choose his disciples, after he had fed the five thousand, on the Mount of Transfiguration, after the Seventy returned from their successful ministry, in the Garden of Gethsemane when preparing for the terrible ordeal just ahead, he prayed to the Father. Even on the Cross did he ask divine forgiveness for his persecutors. On some occasions he spent all night in prayer, pouring out his innermost heart to Him whom he loved to characterize as "my Father," "your Father," "our Father."

True prayer is never for things. God is not a Santa Claus to be petitioned for the materiality which one may seem to need, want, or desire. But appeal to the

divine source of all reality touches divine Law, which does supply the needful things. The promise is that, following righteous prayer and true service, the "things" needed should be added. This is, however, something quite apart from praying for things. If the prayer be righteous and for the primary purpose of gaining a keener sense of the Father's presence and love for His children, the things inevitably will follow, for one thus gains rapport with the great law of love which operates to meet the human need. Without the operation of divine Law, the earth would scarcely bring forth the food which humanity believes necessary for its subsistence.

Of Jesus' many instructions regarding successful prayer both implicit and direct, two stand out with special prominence: namely, perfect childlike trust, the full unquestioning faith, the unshakable conviction that God is at hand, that His blessings are equal to the meeting of all human needs; and the spirit of forgiveness. No one can successfully approach the throne of grace with malice, revenge, or hatred in his heart. He must indeed have forgiveness, as he would be forgiven.

It was not for material things but for spiritual blessings that Jesus taught his disciples to pray. But he well knew that righteous prayer would result in the necessary things being added. A sad perversion of the carnal mind keeps mortals from asking for that which the divine All-Father is constantly giving out in unstinted measure. If the carnal mind knew this and followed its leading, it would cease to be carnal, for it would then partake of the qualities of that "mind . . . which was also in Christ Jesus." ⁴

Prayer develops the state of thought which accepts the

⁴ *Philippians 2:5.*

gracious gifts, priceless and inexhaustible, which ever flow from the divine Source of all good. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." ⁵ And this Kingdom is that mental state which knows no unrequited hope, no unsatisfied desire. In that mental state desire is for spiritual reality, not for material treasure, to be expended upon "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." ⁶ Only as men seek to do the will of God, are willing to lay aside selfish desires and truly to serve Him, are prayers answered. And knowledge of God is the preparation, the *sine qua non* of answered prayer.

If there is no God, no divine Presence like the concept of Deity held by the one who is praying, how is it possible for such prayer to be answered? Knowledge of God, definite understanding of Him, must accompany successful prayer. To be sure, the prayer of the little child is often answered out of its pure faith, its perfect assurance that God is the Father, is ready and available to supply all good. There is no doubt in the little child's approach to the throne of grace; and this perfect confidence is a necessary requisite to successful prayer.

The day is far spent which held that God was an anthropomorphic Being, apart from His creation, who was to be appeased and mollified in order to secure His blessing, expressed in grace and forgiveness. Revelation is wholly reconciled to reason in the true concept of Deity. Jesus not only gave the world the true concept of prayer, but he preceded this priceless gift by revealing the true nature of God, thus making it possible for mortals to pray aright. As Christians come to gain clearer and more logical concepts of the Great Teacher, of his priceless revelation to humanity, it will inevitably

⁵ Luke 12:32.

⁶ I John 2:16.

follow that true worship will replace much of the formal "mechanized" methods of approach to God, the Father, who has blessed all His children with all that could bless and happify.

The poet has well said,

"Prayer is the heart's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed;
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.

"Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try;
And prayer's sublimest strain doth reach
The Majesty on high.

"Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air:
His watchword, overcoming death:
He enters heaven with prayer."

—James Montgomery

XXIII

The Last Journey to Jerusalem

AS THE time for the Passover approached, Jesus and the Twelve prepared to attend. The disciples, it appears, were bewildered somewhat by the course of recent events, and by the words of the Master, but Jesus himself well knew the course events would take. A sense of uncertainty pervaded the atmosphere, an uncertainty accompanied by ill-bodings. Yet to follow the Leader was their duty.

Crossing the Jordan near the Dead Sea, they entered and passed through Jericho. Then occurred an incident that illustrates Jesus' disregard for the social status of those whose hospitality he would accept. Zaccheus, it appears, was a prominent publican who had accumulated considerable wealth. He had heard of the works wrought by the Galilean prophet and desired to see him. Too short of stature to look over the heads of the crowd, he climbed a sycamore tree and waited the passing of the Master. On seeing him up the tree, Jesus called to him to come down, for he wished to stay with him. Zaccheus gladly obeyed and received Jesus in his home. This again aroused the onlookers to charge the Master with willingness to associate with sinners, for publicans were so regarded by the hypocritical Pharisees.

It is apparent that the presence of the Master brought a definite change in the mental outlook of Zaccheus, and he wished to show some measure of the regeneration that had come to him. Arising, he declared that he was prepared to give half his wealth to the poor and to restore

whatever he might have wrongfully acquired. The genuineness of this declaration was so patent to Jesus that he at once declared that salvation had come to the house; and he recognized Zaccheus as a true son of Abraham. And Zaccheus followed with the declaration of his purpose to restore that which was lost, manifesting a state of consciousness which constitutes an approach to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Few incidents more clearly show the Master's ability to win friends to his cause even among those of bad repute. Zaccheus was locally regarded as a bad character. As chief of the tax gatherers, he had carried on the dishonest methods peculiar to that calling so successfully that he had become rich. And these riches, it must be recalled, often were gained through extortion exercised in the process of tax gathering. He was, in modern terms, a successful grafter. The depth of his iniquity makes all the more impressive his sudden conversion in the saintly presence of the Son of God. That he was far from wholly bad, however, is apparent from his desire to see the Messiah. A spark of goodness abode with him, a spark about to be set aflame in the Master's presence.

Then followed a parable which Jesus uttered when he saw that the disciples believed the Kingdom about to be established. The parable of the Pounds has an obvious meaning when once its spiritual significance is seen. God's gifts to men are to be utilized, to be developed to greater usefulness. One who received apparently a lesser gift was afraid to put it to use but hid it in a napkin. This was of no profit to the nobleman. Consequently it was but just that it should be taken from him and given to another who would use it in the service of the giver.

Even from a material standpoint, the parable conveys

a lesson in justice. When its spiritual significance is gained, it is seen to convey a precious lesson for the seeker for the Kingdom, for spiritual understanding. Even a slight glimpse of the spiritual glory possessed by the children of God should stimulate us to greater efforts to obtain the precious prize—complete understanding. To him who makes no effort to progress but hides his talent in some form of materiality, the vision is darkened and he misses the opportunity to gain heavenly riches.

After this conversation, the journey to the Holy City for the Passover was resumed. The journey was not a joyous one. The disciples were depressed by an indefinable sense of untoward events just ahead. A feeling akin to dread had come upon them. Aware as they were of the growing antagonism to the Master's teachings, and that Jerusalem was the very center of conservative Judaism, they were conscious of impending danger. This of necessity rendered them joyless. They knew that there was the seat of authority both of Jewish law and of Roman domination. How would their beloved Teacher be received at the great festival, was the query uppermost in their hearts. And the uncertainty was shot through with the intangible dread which foretells impending evil. They were convinced that the attendance of Jesus upon the feast at this time might precipitate his doom.

No doubt the disciples in some measure reflected the conviction entertained by the Master himself that this was the last journey he was to make with his chosen band. Jesus had "steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem."¹ His determination was not to be set aside. Never had he failed to carry forward his purpose to establish his Messiahship at whatever cost to himself.

¹ Luke 9:51.

Once convinced of the holy mission entrusted to him, he carried on with unshaken purpose. To be sure, at times the flesh struggled with the spirit, but invariably the spirit conquered. And now, when he was approaching the crisis, there was to be no turning aside.

Another appealing incident occurs. A blind man, hearing of the coming of the miracle worker from Galilee, seats himself by the side of the road, hoping for relief from his disability. As he awaits the coming with hopeful heart, the crowd stirs. What is happening? "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by," he is told. His moment has come. Loudly he cries out, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me."² His cry reaches the ears of Jesus, who asks that the man be brought to him. He is brought stumbling through the crowd, and, once in his presence, he answers Jesus' query as to what he wants. "Lord, that I might receive my sight."³ Jesus' reply was directly to the point, "Thy faith hath made thee whole." So great faith could scarcely fail to receive the message of freedom from all material restriction that was ever paramount in the consciousness of this Son of God. Error could not withstand the impact of the truth that God had created man in His own image, hence spiritual and perfect in a degree as Himself; and that perfection was permanent, never to be replaced by imperfection.

Apart from the importance which attaches to the summary and instantaneous healing of the blind man, the experience contains an important incident. Jesus is addressed as "son of David," not "a," nor "any" son, but "son," a title which Jesus would probably have rebuked if applied by one of his disciples, because of its Messianic implication.

² Mark 10:47.

³ Mark 10:51, 52.

The incidents at Jericho must have intensified the wonder of the band as to what it was all about, what the significance of these marvels which they so frequently beheld, wrought by him whose followers they had become. The wonder grew with the multiplication of these, to them, still "supernatural" experiences.

The Pharisees hated Jesus because he denounced their methods of worship, broke what they regarded as their most sacred laws, such as, for example, Sabbath observance. He had even told these "highbrows" that harlots and publicans had a better chance to enter the Kingdom than they. He had denounced them, how often! Scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites he had blasted with language as terrible as tongue could utter. What effect had all this upon the minds of the hierarchy and its dependents? Had it crystallized into a definite purpose to destroy this disturber of the peace, this denouncer of their most sacred methods? These and many other questionings must have stirred the minds of the Twelve as they climbed the long incline which reaches all the way from lowly Jericho to the heights of Jerusalem, "the city of the great King."⁴ And so they journeyed as far as Bethany, where, six days before the Passover, they rested before making their entrance into the city of David.

It appears that at the end of that period the disciples had regained their accustomed joy and now set about the completion of their journey without dread. The Passover should be a happy festival. On the day of their entrance, as they arrived at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of the disciples to a near-by village with instructions to fetch a colt which they would find tied there, an unbroken colt, which, in fact, had never been

⁴ Matthew 5:35.

ridden. Jesus, foreseeing some possible objection to the commandeering of the colt, told the two to reply to any queries as to their purpose that the Lord had need for the beast. They found the colt as promised and brought it to the Master, and, when a blanket had been put upon it, the Master mounted. As the procession got under way, many persons threw their garments in the road and others bore tree branches, which, apparently, had been brought out from the city, where they had been used at a previous Feast of the Tabernacles in September, and kept over for the ensuing year.

So the procession was formed and was rapidly augmented by enthusiasts eager to see this prophet of Galilee, of whose teachings they had heard and of whose works many had no doubt been witnesses. Now he was come to celebrate the greatest of all Jewish festivals, the time-honored Feast of the Passover. Of necessity their exuberance found expression in a warm welcome. "Hosanna!"⁵ they shouted. "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest."⁶

It is to be noted that in Mark, the oldest account of this event, Jesus is not hailed as "King" or "Messiah," but as one coming "in the name of the Lord." And in that appearance they saw the coming of "the kingdom of our father David."⁷ This would seem to imply that behind this salutation was the thought of an earthly kingdom, the restoration of the kingdom of David, which had long been regarded as the golden era of the Hebrew race. With its restoration the ancient glory would return and Jehovah would plentifully bless the righteous.

The disciples must have been deeply moved at the

⁵ Mark 11:9.

⁶ Luke 19:38.

⁷ Mark 11:9, 10.

tremendous acclaim with which their Master was received. It was indeed a mighty triumph for him. At last he was being properly recognized, was now coming into his own.

The effect of all this upon the Master himself was quite the opposite to that upon the Twelve. He had replied to the Pharisees who had asked him to rebuke his followers for their hilarious outburst that if these should hold their peace the very stones would cry out. So important was it that he be recognized as the Christ, as the Son of God, that even inanimate things, even stones, would become vocal in recognizing and proclaiming his Messiahship.

As the procession, moving from the brow of the hill, neared the city gates, all at once a deep hush fell upon the crowd. Jesus was weeping. In the intense excitement aroused by his appearance, far above the emotional outburst which greeted him, he saw the true situation. He saw a great city with its swarming crowds living in poverty and want, in misery and sin, in sickness and suffering, when, if they but knew, salvation was at hand, peace and plenty and joy. For here was one, even the Christ, equipped with the Spirit of Truth in a degree equal to the evangelization of the whole world, if poor humanity would but awaken from its deep sleep and lay hold of the blessings which the heavenly Father had prepared for all His children. It is little wonder that Jesus, with a full realization that the Kingdom was really at hand with its illimitable blessedness, and that in spite of this poor humanity would stumble blindly on, sunk in the depth of misery and want, should weep, should shed tears of bitter disappointment. It is little wonder that this realization brought tears of compassion, of anguish of the heart from this most merciful, most understanding of all men.

The incident finds perfect expression in the words of Matthew's Gospel. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"⁸ The depth of feeling exhibited by the Master was but commensurate with his profound understanding of the immeasurable blessings ready at hand, if mortals would but turn their eyes from the material world, with all their self-imposed constrictions, to behold the incomparable glory of spiritual living and blessedness. Such realization as came to the Master could scarcely fail to stir the depths of his compassion, even to the outward sign of weeping. It was tender grief, a natural consequence of the recognition of the contrast between the real man, the child of God, abiding forever in the Father's house, and poor humanity living in a sordid and miserable state.

When Jesus first entered the Temple, he looked about and saw much that must have greatly disturbed him. But apparently he did not then deem it the time to take action such as he was prepared to take on the following day. To understand the situation, consideration should be given to the actual happenings on the great Feast Day in the matter of sacrifices. Animals by the scores, hundreds and even thousands, were to be slaughtered during the celebration. Hecatombs of fat oxen, thousands of sheep, uncounted doves constituted the sacrifice. For what? To appease an angry God, that He would forgive the people their sins and continue to bless them.

Now these animals for sacrifice were to be creatures without blemish, the best that could be raised. They

⁸ Matthew 23:37.

were assembled in the outer court of the Temple, where the Gentiles were also permitted to foregather. Animals were for sale to those who had money to buy, but the money to be paid must be Temple money. This was issued by the priestly authority and thus constituted a monopoly for the profit of the hierarchy. Moreover, since the creatures to be sacrificed must be without blemish, the priesthood had developed a practical monopoly of the rearing of animals of this standard. Still further, the sacrificial creatures were to be inspected by the priests, who had authority to reject any sacrifice as below the required standard.

It takes no extraordinary stretch of the imagination to picture the scene as Jesus entered the Temple. In the courtyard were folded this multitude of creatures for the sacrifice, with the bleatings and mooings of animals crowded in unaccustomed spaces. Added to this were the raucous shouts of the owners, anxious to dispose of their property, and the cries of the money-changers, hoping to profit from the necessities of the worshipers. All this, with the picture of the great bloodletting soon to follow, a bloodletting known to fill the pool of Bethesda to the rim with its crimson tide—all this must have stricken the heart of him who knew its utter futility, its meaningless brutality, all this must have turned him away with a firm determination to cleanse the Temple of its uncleanness, if not of its hypocrisy and the falsity of the concept of worship about to be enacted there. He turned back from this scene of confusion and meaningless formalism to the quiet of Bethany, no doubt to the home of his dear and understanding friends, Mary and Martha and Lazarus.

As recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, it appears that, following his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, Jesus

went to the Temple and drove out the moneychangers and those engaged in the accustomed merchantry associated with the great sacrifices connected with the celebration of the Passover.

XXIV

The Last Days in Jerusalem

THE incidents which arose in connection with Jesus' entry into Jerusalem made a deep impression upon the disciples. The extent and character of the greeting of the enthusiastic multitude that met and followed him, the throngs which pressed about him, strewing palm branches in the way as he passed, stirred deep questionings among those who had followed his career from the very beginning of his ministry. John writes that the disciples did not at first understand these things, manifestly implying that later the significance was unfolded to them.

What led Jesus to enter the Holy City at this time and in this manner has caused much discussion among scholars. Was he fully aware of the course events were to take, and in view of this was he boldly challenging the authorities? Did he send for the colt because of weariness after his long journey? Was it to stir the people both to proclaim and accept him as Messiah? Or was he testing his strength with the masses, offering openly the opportunity for them to choose between the authority of the Jewish hierarchy and the Kingdom which he had so frequently acclaimed? There is no reason to accept the view that he was encouraging the people to rise against established authority either of the Sanhedrin or of Rome. Professor Kent points out that if that had been the fact, it would have been brought against him during his trial before the Jewish authorities.

If we follow the trend of the Synoptic Gospels, the

conclusion is reached that the entrance both in manner and purpose was in fulfillment of Scripture. Zechariah 9:9 reads, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." The prophet thus foretells the coming of the Christ, not with political authority, but as the lowly messenger of God, to proclaim to the people freedom and the coming of the Kingdom. This was something wholly unlike the Hebrew race's vision of the restoration of the ancient glory of the kingdom of David.

Nothing could have excelled the humility of his entrance upon the colt of an ass, the humblest of all beasts. No, it is plainly manifest that the Master was offering the people the choice between the spiritual freedom to be attained through gaining the Kingdom and the continuance of their present condition of semislavery under the long-accepted rule of the Jewish authority, supplemented now by a Roman overlord. The offering of the Nazarene in humility and utmost simplicity characterized the only method by which the blessings of the Kingdom were to be acquired. The words of greeting of the multitude from the ancient psalm (118:26) plainly indicated the conviction that he who was to come was now present. The Messiah had come in unassuming but impressive humility. He was to be their Deliverer, not to establish an earthly throne in grandeur and display of material superiority, but in the becoming attitude of the one sent of God to deliver the captives from their bondage.

Whatever purpose be assigned to the incident, it is plain that now Jesus had flung aside all desire for obscurity, all purpose to conceal his true identity. Here he was entering the very seat of the Jewish authority,

boldly, and accompanied by a multitude proclaiming him as coming in the name of the Lord. Surely the crisis was near. Either he was to be authoritatively accepted or he was to be removed as a disturber of the peace, as one whose presence and doctrines threatened the very foundations upon which the Jewish hierarchy had built its superstructure of religious and civic authority. At last the issue was drawn.

After the entrance, as we have seen, Jesus withdrew to Bethany, doubtless to rest in the companionship of his beloved friends for the last time. On the morrow, as he proceeded toward the city, being hungry, he approached a fig tree, hoping to find fruit. But, finding none, as the time of figs had not come, nevertheless he declared that no man should thereafter eat fruit from the tree. As Jesus and his disciples again passed the fig tree on the following morning, Peter called Jesus' attention to the condition of the tree. Its leaves were withered.

Matthew elaborates the incident by stating that the disciples, amazed at the sudden change in the appearance, asked the Master how it had happened. To their query, Jesus replied, "Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done."¹ No words of the Master place greater emphasis upon the potency of faith in demonstrating the ability of spiritual power to accomplish unusual things, even the removing of a mountain.

The seeming lack of logic in the destruction of the fig tree because of its failure to bear figs out of season may be explained by Jesus' knowledge that the tree was barren, that it never bore figs and therefore was but an

¹ Matthew 21:21.

encumbrance upon the earth. Professor Kent proposes that this story has an analogy in the parable of the vineyard leased to the vinedressers. He feels that Jesus had in thought the Jewish nation and its pharisaical leaders whose life and works sorely belied their thin promise of fruitfulness. This makes of the incident a parable, a practical solution of the difficulty.

Professor Kent further proposes that the parable illustrates Jesus' thought at the time: that the conviction had gradually grown upon him that the Jewish race, whose traditions were dear to him—the Temple with its holy purposes, the hierarchy, and scribes—were but fruitless, unproductive trees undeserving of divine favor, to be destroyed through the activity of divine Law. As this Law operates to remove whatever obstructs the progress of the advancing Kingdom, this may well have been a factor in the motive which led to the Master's attitude toward the fruitless fig tree.

On entering the city, Jesus and the disciples proceeded to the Temple, and Jesus, seeing the traffic carried on there, as we have learned, drove out the money-changers and the sellers of doves, applying a whip which presumably he had acquired while in Bethany. The defilers of the Temple, awed by the determination of the Master, fled so precipitately that the tables were overturned, and none was permitted to carry a vessel through the Temple. His cleansing process was thus completed. His words explain the reason for his act, "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves."² It is little wonder that the leaders, gaping in astonishment at the violence of his acts and the challenging boldness of his works, were strengthened in their determination to destroy this revolutionist

² Matthew 21:13.

who would resort even to violence to interfere with their accustomed methods of cheating the people at the sacred festival of the Passover.

It was in the spirit of the ancient prophets that the Master acted. The fire of Isaiah and Amos and Ezekiel blazed forth as he witnessed the desecration of the Temple which the authorities permitted, even encouraged. It was indeed the abiding place of graft and chicanery, of hypocrisy and cant; and the people had no recourse. This conviction on the part of the Master stirred him deeply, and he hesitated not to take the means necessary to correct the situation. The Temple, which the prophet-statesman had declared should be "a house of prayer for all people,"³ had become the shelter for hypocrisy and ill-concealed robbery of the people.

On the return journey to the city the next morning, the disciples, as we have seen, queried the Master regarding the withered fig tree. He took occasion to proclaim the efficacy of righteous prayer, and, according to Mark, continued his instructions upon this important subject. In addition to a full faith, there must be forgiveness, release from any resentment one might hold toward another. This is needed in order to be forgiven. For forgiveness begets forgiveness from the Father. "Forgive as we would be forgiven" is thus posited a prime necessity to successful prayer. Faith and the mental attitude of forgiveness, even to the extent of eliminating from consciousness every trace of resentment toward others, that is, a loving, humble recognition of the blessings which the Father is forever bestowing upon His own, is the sure approach to successful prayer. God does not change His holy Will. Mortals are to lift their thought to the reception of that which has already been given to all by divine Love.

³ Isaiah 56:7.

The plot against the Master gained much intensity from the cleansing process in which Jesus engaged. The next day, as he was walking about the Temple, the chief priests and scribes and other officials came to ask him by what authority he did what he had done. Who gave him the right to act as he had acted? Not to be caught in this clumsy trap, the Master answered by asking them a question. If they would answer it, he would then disclose his authority. His query was, "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?"⁴ And he awaited their answer. Here was a poser! And they reasoned, "If we shall say, From heaven; he will say . . . Why did ye not then believe him?" And that they did not believe was tragically plain from their reception of his fate without protest.

But the dilemma had another horn equally troublesome. If they should say "of men," then the people would stir against them, for the common people, believing that John was indeed a prophet, also believed that his message was from God. Completely nonplused, fully aware of the corner into which they had been cleverly put, the high priests and elders confessed that they could not tell. Carrying out the terms of his agreement to the letter, Jesus refused to answer their query as to his authority.

His authority, as that of John, was from on high. To tell them this in their present state of thought would be futile. They were scarcely prepared to accept any statement that came direct from God, so blinded were they by their false sense of authority.

These incidents in the Temple perfectly illustrate both the fearlessness and the complete selflessness of the man Jesus. Entirely oblivious of his own welfare, he

⁴ Matthew 21:25 ff.

rose in deep indignation against the manifest wrongs perpetrated by the authorities against the helpless people. Not his own welfare but theirs was constantly uppermost in the mind of this fearless reformer. And he protested through his profound sense of the divine Presence. Only when he submitted to their persecution was he carried forward to the great tragedy.

During the following days Jesus taught in the Temple before both the authorities and the people. No doubt the presence of the latter kept the hierarchy from seizing him. The parable of the Vineyard conveyed a direct message for those who had ears to hear. The owner had rented his well-arranged vineyard to husbandmen, and went away. When the time of harvest came, the owner sent a servant to collect the rent. He was harshly received, beaten, and sent back empty-handed. The second man sent to collect the rent was treated even worse, "wounded" and "shamefully handled."⁵ He, too, received nothing. The third was killed, and of others sent, some were wounded and others destroyed; but no rent was paid. The owner, distressed at these happenings, decided to send his only son, beloved and precious to him, believing that, despite the maltreatment of his servants, his son would be treated with respect. But the husbandmen, devoid of respect and wicked to the limit of wickedness, said, "This is kin to the owner of the property. If we kill him, then we will have the vineyard ourselves," and they killed him, the only son of the owner of the vineyard. There was but one thing left for the owner: to destroy the cruel husbandmen, recover the vineyard, and give it to others—to those who would appreciate its value and deal righteously with the owner.

⁵ Mark 12:4.

The significance of the parable is plain. The owner is God. The Jewish people are the husbandmen to whom he rents the vineyard. The heir is Christ Jesus, whom the wicked vineyardmen are to seize and crucify. But he also it is who is to become the headstone of the corner, the bearer of the Truth, which, operative in those with sufficient humility to receive it, will carry forward the work of establishing the Kingdom. Matthew even implies that God will take away the Kingdom from the Jews and give it to those prepared to receive it. There can be no doubt that the effect of this incisive parable of the vineyard was to intensify the determination of the hierarchy to do away with this increasingly dangerous preacher of sedition exercised not necessarily against the state but against the vested interests of Jewish authority.

Determined to entrap him, regardless of their previous futile attempts, the hierarchy again approach the Master. This time, as we have seen, the inquisitors are Herodians, Jews who had defended the rule of Rome, and clever Pharisees. Cunningly do they lay their trap. With soft words is the approach made. "Master, we know that you are true and carest for no man; for you have no regard for human personality. You even teach the truth in God's way."⁶ Then having, as they hoped, mollified this obstreperous dissenter, they fired their shot, as they believed, loaded with difficulties. "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar?" Should they, or should they not give tribute to Caesar, that is, to the symbol of Roman authority? But they little knew the cleverness of him they would entrap. Asking for a penny, he inquires as to the image and inscription on the piece. Of course they reply, "Caesar's." Jesus nonchalantly replies,

⁶ Mark 12:14 ff.

"Then give to Caesar what belongs to him, and to God what belongs to Him!" It is little wonder that they marveled at his reply, for it clearly avoided their purpose. They had no more to say.

Luke alone records certain statements attributed to Jesus, in which he denies the popular doctrine that punishment befalls only those who are sinful and therefore deserving of punishment. Some of the people present had apparently told Jesus that Pilate had mixed blood of the Galileans with the sacrifices of the Jews. The Master's response was to ask if they believed that this was because those Galileans who were thus treated were more wicked than others. No, they were not! But all must repent in order to escape punishment. That is to say, sin is punished so long as people are sinful. And he drives home the point by asking if they think that the eighteen men who fell from the Tower of Siloam and were killed were more sinful than the dwellers in Jerusalem. Repentance of sin followed by reformation is the only method of escape from the punishment due to sin.

Again was the Master approached in the effort to entrap him in some erroneous or unlawful position. This time it was the Sadducees, the aristocrats who deny the resurrection. And it was in regard to this conviction that they queried him. They repeated the Mosaic law which provides that the brother of a man who dies should marry the widow. They presented a suppositional case. There are seven brothers. The first marries and dies; the second marries the widow and he too dies; the third marries the widow and dies, until all have married this unfortunate woman. Finally the woman herself dies. Now, whose wife should she be in the resurrection? A poser, coming from those who denied the resurrection altogether! But the Master was again

too clever for his accusers. Instantly he replied. Could it be possible that these wise men should err, since they were ignorant both of the Scriptures and the power of God? In the resurrection there is no marriage or giving in marriage. Hence their question is perfectly resolved. It is, in fact, no problem at all. He adds, touching the question of the resurrection of life after death, that God told Moses, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."⁷ Not the God of the dead, but of the living. They were holding to wholly erroneous beliefs in failing to know that man in God's image, the expression of eternal Life, lives forever. Again did this keenest of men turn aside the wicked sophistry of his would-be destroyers by his clear understanding of God and of man as the forever expression of the Life which is both infinite and eternal.

The scribes were so well satisfied with the answers returned by Jesus to his divers questioners that they ventured to question him further. One asked about the first commandment. Answering promptly, the Master replied that "the first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."⁸ Not content with repeating only the first commandment, Jesus continued with the second: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."⁹ And he added, "There is none other commandment greater than these." The questioning scribe, impressed by the Master's statement, voiced his approval in such definite terms as to elicit the assurance from Jesus that he was not far from the Kingdom.

⁷ Mark 12:26, 27.

⁸ Mark 12:29.

⁹ Mark 12:31.

While it seems this ended the questioning, yet Jesus in his further discourse touched upon certain theses to which he knew the hierarchy was committed. One of these, firmly held, pertained to the lineage of the Messiah, that he was a descendent from David. It was a question frequently raised by Jesus in his many discourses. "How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David?"¹⁰ For David himself had said by the Holy Ghost, "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool."¹¹ If David thus called him Lord, how could he be the son of David? The meaning apparently is to deny that the Messiah was necessarily of the lineage of David. It was not the custom of Jesus to discuss publicly the question of his Messiahship, and accordingly some scholars assert that this incident, even though it appears in all the Synoptics, is an interpolation introduced at some later period by an enthusiastic Christian.

There follows in the Marcan narrative a warning uttered against the scribes. How they love to parade in their official robes and to be publicly recognized for their learning and for their elevated social status! How they seek distinction in public places, occupying the most prominent seats in the synagogues and at the feasts! How dishonest they are in dealing with the property of widows, and yet they make long prayers! They cannot escape their iniquity; they must pay for their sins, for the account must always be settled.

Luke follows the words recorded by Mark (which only mildly arraign the hypocritical scribes) with as severe a condemnation of both scribes and Pharisees as one can readily imagine. Jesus spared them nothing in

¹⁰ Mark 12:35.

¹¹ Mark 12:36.

the uncovering of their wickedness. And it appears that the terms "scribes" and "Pharisees" were used somewhat indiscriminately. Fearlessly does he uncover their sinful ways, pronouncing woes upon them without limit. They appear holy while inside they are filled with dishonesty. Outwardly they appear to be righteous as whitewashed sepulchers; inwardly they are filled with uncleanness. They claim that had they been present in the days of the fathers, they would not have been found having part in the slaying of the prophets. But by their deeds they are now proving their descent from those very ones who did slay the holy men of old. Upon these same hypocrites and their like will descend the punishment for the accumulative guilt of those of like wickedness who have gone before.

Jesus fearlessly laid bare the unholy methods of the upper classes of Jewish society. It is not to be assumed that all scribes and Pharisees were equally wicked. But it is beyond question that these classes were pretty generally permeated with a spirit and purpose which were far from the true religion and worship of the prophets who had gone before. It is equally true that the times were degenerate, a period during which the moral tide was at low ebb. And Jesus, fully aware of the condition, spared no words of condemnation. With him, to recognize public delinquencies was to denounce them.

In sharp contrast to the methods against which Jesus had pronounced his seven "woes" is an incident, simple in character yet conveying a lesson of primary significance. Mark relates it simply. Jesus sat near the treasure box watching the people passing in and out of the Temple. He saw men of wealth put in large sums. Presently came a poor widow, who, although possessed of very little, yet desired to do her part in support of the Temple. She put in "two mites, which make a far-

thing.”¹² Deeply impressed by the incident, Jesus called his disciples to tell them that the poor widow had cast in more than all the others; not more in monetary value, to be sure, but more in the measure of her piety and of her devotion to what was to her the true religion. Socially minded as was the Nazarene, assuredly when he witnessed the gross materialism, sophistry, and hypocrisy of the upper classes, he was mightily stirred to use the power at his command to right these social wrongs. He was so committed to the cause of the common people that he would even surrender his human sense of life in their behalf.

One day as Jesus and his party were leaving the Temple, one of the disciples called his attention to the magnificence of the Temple and its adjacent buildings, how grand, how substantial they were. But Jesus saw far into the future. He knew the insubstantial character of all material things; that only truly substantial, truly permanent, are the things of the Spirit. Hence his reply to the remark. “There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”¹³ How true was his foretelling! Not only was the Temple a few decades later totally destroyed, but today upon its site rests the Mosque of Omar, one of the most magnificent structures Islam has ever erected.

In the noble structure hallowed in the eyes of Jewry with many sacred traditions, viewed by those ready to desecrate it for material gain as a source of abundance, Jesus saw that which shut off the people from the blessings of true worship. Had he not told the woman at the well of Sychar in simple terms what true worship was? Neither on Mount Gerizim nor at Jerusalem was true worship, for in both places it was closely involved with

¹² Mark 12:42.

¹³ Mark 13:2.

ritualism and materialism. But they that truly worship, "shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."¹⁴ How far from this ideal was the type of worship carried on in the Temple from which only shortly before he had driven the money-changers, those engaged in unholy merchantry. Jesus well knew that unless it was founded upon the Rock, Christ, Truth, nothing could stand; that indeed the things seen, even such impressive structures as they then beheld, were but temporal because only the unseen, that is by physical vision, is spiritual and therefore eternal.

There is little doubt but that the steps of Jesus were constantly dogged by spies who were seeking evidence against him. Accordingly, his assertion regarding the destruction of the Temple, which was anathema to the Jews, could but serve to intensify the growing hatred against him. The determination to destroy him was increasing rapidly, even though many of the attempts to entrap him had failed.

Later, when Jesus and the disciples, as was their wont, were assembled on the Mount of Olives, certain of them who had been deeply impressed by his words, which they scarcely understood, asked him frankly when these predicted events would take place—a perfectly natural question. Yet the Master did not directly answer them but took occasion rather to utter certain warnings. Especially should they beware of false teachers, those who would come claiming to be the Christ. Such claims should be denied. There was, there could be, but one Christ. Furthermore, while there would be great strife among mortals—wars and rumors of wars—yet that would not be the end of the reign of evil. The world was far from ready to enter the Kingdom, the divine

¹⁴ John 4:23.

consciousness, wherein abides only peace. The evil manifestations were to be numerous, widespread, and very divergent in character. Not only would nation be arrayed against nation in deadly combat, but the earth itself should be shaken; famines would follow, and disaster be widespread.

How truly did this man of God foretell the future! Not only did the immediate future see his prophecies fulfilled in every terrible detail, but the evils of that day, still prevalent and dominant in the carnal mind, again are striving to dominate mankind. Nations have not learned the lesson of true fellowship: that the Fatherhood of God finds its inevitable sequence in the brotherhood of man; that only as this Fatherhood of God is accepted will that degree of brotherhood be gained that is the only safeguard against terrible war, the destructive conflict which arrays nation against nation, one people against another.

With this prophetic utterance, the direct narrative changes its character. Admonitions and prophecies, definitely apocalyptic, follow. The dire experiences to which the disciples are to be subjected are set forth in tragic terms. They will be harshly treated, beaten, and abused; even in the synagogues they will find no sanctuary. They will for the Christ's sake be brought before kings and magistrates because of their espousal of his cause. The good news is to be published throughout the world, among all nations. But they are not to prepare a defense in advance. The divine Love, which always sustains God's children, will furnish them in the hour of need with what they are to say. It will be the Christ, Truth, that will fill their mouths. Opposition to the oncoming Christ will set brother against brother, even when the penalty of death is involved. Children

will rise up against their parents, even though such exposure means death. Even these disciples will be hated, but he assured them that if they endure to the end they will be saved. Victory will attend the faithful.

The warnings contained in Mark 13 may be regarded in three classes. The first, those which definitely warn the disciples against the allurements of people who will in the years to come attempt their destruction. Jesus plainly foresaw that false teachers and prophets would undertake to lead astray even those who had best understood his message. Even the wars and calamities which were to ensue should not be mistaken as meaning that the end of the world was approaching. Some commentators believe that the allusion is to the Parthian Wars, which occurred some twenty years later, to the great famine which devastated Palestine about ten years later, and to the earthquakes that shook Asia in the decade between. Foreseeing the events, as Jesus was able to do, he would warn his dear disciples against attaching false conclusions to them, terrible as they might be because of the suffering entailed.

The second prophecy revives the apocalyptic statements of Daniel and apparently refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, presumably by the Romans in 70 A.D. The Christians are to flee precipitately without regard for what they leave behind. Escape, and that without hesitation or halting, is the way of safety. The destruction is to be ruthless, and only those who wisely hasten will escape the calamity. And unless the Lord had shortened the days, none would have been saved. This apparently refers to the short days of winter and the correspondingly long nights which would facilitate their escape. It seems that this was spoken from the point of view of the Church in some later time.

There follows the prophecy of "the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory."¹⁵ This coming is to be accompanied or preceded by great convulsions in nature; even the sun will be darkened and the moon will shed no light. The stars shall fall and the powers of heaven be greatly shaken. The language here employed recalls certain passages of like import in the Old Testament, wherein both Isaiah and Daniel foretold the coming of this "Son of man." These statements, some scholars believe, may have had the purpose of warning the early Christians against the expectation of an early return of the "Son of man." A better and more logical explanation is found in the thought that if the "Son of man" here referred to has the meaning of the Messiah or Christ, it is to be associated with the appearance of the Comforter, which Jesus promised would come when he should no longer be with them. Be that as it may, this proposition is strengthened by the fact that Jesus as the Son of man did not return and has not returned "in the clouds, with great glory." The Christ as Comforter has been, is, ever present.

Although Paul was prone to accept this prophecy literally at the beginning of his missionary works, as it failed of fulfillment it gradually faded from his letters. It must be remembered that at this period, that is, during the first century, apocalyptic writing was very common, and many prophecies were set up of events that never occurred. There is no doubt that the authors of the Synoptics wrote in the midst of this atmosphere, while John, it seems, quite escaped its influence, if one may judge from the scanty reference in the Fourth Gospel. John manifestly saw the Kingdom as present

¹⁵ Mark 13:26.

and possible of attainment by all who would seek it righteously, rather than as a cataclysmic event to be accompanied by great convulsions of nature. It would come through spiritualized consciousness and the development of the true brotherhood which follows upon recognition of the Fatherhood of God.

That John's version was true has been proved by the history of the nineteen centuries that have elapsed. The Christ has come, has ever been present, but poor humanity in its blindness has, except in recent years and in small degree, failed to recognize this priceless fact and put it to use in evangelization of the world. There could be no more striking proof that the Christ has not been accepted than is found in the direful calamity now facing the great nations of the world. Having eyes, they see not that God, through His messenger, is ever at hand and ever available to meet every untoward situation confronting mankind.

May it not be that those scholars who have held that Jesus himself was inspired to the apocalyptical hope implied in the prediction of the second coming have been mistaken in the true interpretation of the passage? This becomes possible, even probable, when it is clearly seen that Jesus was the messenger, and Christ the message—the truth about God, about His universe, including the real man made in God's image. It is of more than passing importance that in Jesus' teachings during the Galilean ministry no least hint of these apocalyptical happenings occurs. Only toward the end, when he faced the situation in Jerusalem, did these predictions appear. Jesus held always and resolutely to the statement that the Kingdom was at hand and was to be established through reformation, through transformation of consciousness from a material to a spiritual basis. This experience was

not to be signalized by tumultuous occurrences. Rather was it the advent of the "still small voice"¹⁶ in the human heart, the working of the leaven of Truth in the mentality that had been prepared to receive the leaven, to admit and to cherish its transforming potency.

Apocalyptic writings had the purpose, not to be decried, of heartening the early Christians with the assurance of a blessed state into which the righteous would enter as a reward for their righteousness. In this purpose it was commendable. And undoubtedly John, on the Isle of Patmos, through an exalted vision resulting from a transcendental spiritual state, saw and recorded that which would transpire in the course of the development of true Christianity. This genuine apocalyptic vision, however, should not be confused by association with many similar writings, less spiritually conceived and less honestly expressed.

While Jesus and the disciples were sojourning in Bethany during the days just preceding the Passover, a feast was tendered him in the house of Simon the leper. It seems quite probable that Simon may have been healed by the Master, since, if he were still suffering from leprosy, it would have been in violation of the law to entertain guests at dinner. As they were engaged in the meal, a woman entered, bearing an alabaster box of ointment, which she poured upon the head of Jesus. Some present objected to this seeming extravagance, since the ointment was costly, worth even three hundred pence, about seventy-five dollars in our money. They criticized her for her extravagance. The ointment might have been sold and the proceeds given to the poor.

But Jesus objected to this criticism. "Let her alone"; he said, "why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good

¹⁶I Kings 19:12.

work on me.”¹⁷ As they had the poor always with them, they could serve them at any time, but his presence was but temporary. And he added a significant statement: “She is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.”¹⁸

It was the Hebrew custom when inducting a person into high office to anoint the head as a symbol. The woman’s act at that moment seems to imply that it was the thought of the people to make Jesus their king.

The term “Messiah” signifies the anointed one, a fact which gives a deeper meaning to the woman’s act. But, alert as ever, the Master turned aside such implication with a quick reference to the time when his body would be anointed for the burial, an incident so soon to follow. With prophetic vision Jesus declared that the act of the woman would be remembered wherever his gospel should be preached.

John’s Gospel describes a somewhat different setting for this supper in Bethany. He places it in the home of Martha and Mary, with Lazarus present and Martha serving. Mary anoints the feet of Jesus, wiping them with her hair. Judas, who was to betray the Master, makes the complaint of extravagance, and Jesus replies substantially in accord with Mark’s record. John adds that there were many people present, as much to see Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead, as to see Jesus himself.

¹⁷ Mark 14:6.

¹⁸ Mark 14:8.

XXV

The Last Supper

THE SACRAMENTS

FOR several days prior to the Passover Jesus remained in Jerusalem, preaching in the Temple and to the constantly assembled crowds outside. Wherever he went, openly the people followed him, but his ministry of healing was practiced less than during his memorable days in Galilee. Meanwhile the opposition of the clerical party was being intensified. This betrayer of their ancient rites, this false prophet, this self-appointed Messiah who had entered Jerusalem on an ass must be put out of the way! His presence was destructive of the very foundations of their theocracy. Thus grew the argument against him.

Jesus was quite aware of this situation. He had become increasingly convinced of what his experience was to be, yet he swerved not. He would follow through to the bitter end the course which as Messiah he had come to foresee. Moreover, he was fully aware of the personality through whom this betrayal would come. Yet he took no steps to avoid it or to remove the traitor from his beloved band. His course was plain. The culmination of his earthly experience was at hand.

The Passover was pending. This most important of all Jewish festivals, coupled with the feast of unleavened bread, was to occur on the 14th of Nisan (April). Wholly aware of the growing plot against him, Jesus especially desired to celebrate the Passover with his brethren. Its popularity was intense and widespread.

Did it not commemorate the "passing over" by the Lord of the blood-sprinkled homes of the Chosen People, while many others perished? As the most important feast in the Jewish calendar drew near, pilgrims came to Jerusalem from far and near to commemorate the favor of God, which had been so definitely proved in the long past when the Hebrew people were excluded from a common fate.

On the eve of the Passover, Jesus expressed the desire to have a last meal with his disciples, but where should this event take place? Where could this little band, so sorely beset, find a place of refuge for the exercise of this solemn rite? Jesus, with his accustomed prescience, directed that two of his disciples should go into the city and follow a man whom they would see bearing a pitcher of water. When this man should enter a house, there they would inquire of the householder as to the location of the guestchamber wherein the Master could eat the Passover with his disciples. In answer to this query they would be shown "a large upper room furnished and prepared"¹ where they would make ready for Jesus and the disciples.

In the evening came Jesus with his disciples to celebrate the sacred event. Early in the meal, apparently, Jesus made the startling announcement that one of those present would betray him. It is little wonder that the faithful disciples who had been so long with him, his most trusted followers, who had witnessed his marvelous works and listened to his precious words, should have been both surprised and grieved at the startling pronouncement. It is little wonder that they murmured among themselves, "Is it I? Is it I?"² Jesus answered that one who was eating with them would be his be-

¹ Mark 14:15.

² Mark 14:19.

trayer. He was indeed to be betrayed, but sad would be the fate of that guilty one.

There has been endless discussion over the mental status of Judas, and, withal, complete disagreement. Opinion has ranged all the way from a characterization of him as the greatest traitor and criminal of all time to an attempt to condone his act on the ground that he fully expected to witness an exhibition of power by Jesus that would resist and overthrow those who would destroy him. The more common conclusion, and it seems by far the most logical one, is that Judas was actuated by a desire to win the favor of the priestly party, hoping thereby to gain prominence and the wealth often attendant upon special favor.

The fact forever remains, however, that, despite the priceless privilege of close association with the Master for a considerable period, during which he had heard the most precious words ever uttered, the oft reiterated assurance of the presence of divine Power, and had repeatedly witnessed positive proof that God is available to meet the human need—in spite of all this, Judas conspired to deliver this Son of God into the hands of those plotting to destroy him. What his motive was can only be a subject for conjecture. What occurred are well established facts. Judas is, however, entitled to the degree of condonation due any mortal who permits himself to be governed and controlled by evil, by a desire for position and prominence, even at the cost of a stabbing consciousness of guilt.

But more blessed experiences accompanied this most memorable and holiest of all meals. Taking a loaf of bread, Jesus broke it and gave it to the disciples with these momentous words, "Take this, it means my body."³

³ Mark 14:22 ff. (Moffatt's Translation).

He also took a cup of wine, and, thanking God, gave it to the disciples, and they all drank of it. Jesus then declared, "This means my covenant-blood which is shed for many; truly I tell you I will never drink the produce of the vine again till the day I drink it new within the Realm of God." Few passages in the Gospels have been more discussed than have the recorded words of the Master spoken at the Last Supper. Just what did he mean by saying that the bread he passed to them was his body? Surely not in a literal sense could bread be his body.

The sacraments of the Christian Church have been built largely upon the interpretation of these words. The doctrines of transubstantiation and of consubstantiation have developed from the contention that the material bread and wine taken at the communion service are transformed by a sacred rite into the actual body and blood of Jesus. Some regard these substances taken at the ceremonial rites as symbolical rather than actual. Others are convinced that Jesus' words have a wholly spiritual connotation: that the bread of life is the Christ, having the substance of Spirit, ever present, to be partaken of through the gaining of spiritual consciousness. Yet others hold that the wine offered by the Master and drunk by the disciples symbolized the spiritual inspiration whereby the true sense of substance, the substance which is Spirit, is gained and apprehended.

This interpretation of the Master's words manifestly lifts the sacrament wholly above the necessity for even material symbols. It implies conscious communion with God, the Source of all existence—being at one with the divine intelligence, the Source of all true knowledge. This relationship is established through a wholly mental process. It is the realization of man's unity with the Father, that man is the child of God, His image and like-

ness, His creature. This experience, obviously, being wholly mental and spiritual, has no need for material symbols. It is a spiritually mental experience, transcending all material beliefs and expressions. It is the process whereby the Kingdom of Heaven is entered. Moreover, the disciple who accepts this interpretation of the occurrences at the Last Supper daily experiences his unity with God, the Source of his being. This privilege of approach to the Father is not reserved for a particular occasion but is a blessed experience which may be had constantly.

Sacramentalism has had a tremendous influence in drying up the streams of living water which flow so copiously from the fountain of Life, revealed through the teachings of the Nazarene. Formalism has taken the place of that spiritual draught of which Jesus said that whoever partakes thereof will never thirst again.

Sure it is that when once is gained the light of understanding, men will no longer love darkness. Overshadowed by materialism, immersed in formalism, the teachings of Jesus have often seemed to take on a material significance which quite hides their spiritual import. Baptism of the Spirit, the only method of real purification, has lost its meaning in the symbol to which is attributed something which it does not inherently possess. The cleansing of the outside of the cup by no means insures the purity of the inside, and purity through spiritual gain is the one road to salvation—freedom from material restrictions. The true sacrament is a spiritual covenant between God and man.

JOHN'S ACCOUNT

The Gospel of John contains important teachings of the Master that do not appear in the Synoptics. John's

account of the Last Supper, while it omits salient points that appear in the other gospels, contains some of the most significant utterances of the Galilean Prophet. Moreover, the Fourth Gospel also recounts certain acts of the Master that the others omit.

Briefly touching upon the supper itself, it tells of the teaching of an important lesson through a simple service, the washing of the feet of the disciples. It should be recalled that in Eastern countries, when a guest arrived, the first courtesy shown to the stranger was to wash his feet, thus cooling and soothing them after a journey over rough and difficult roads. This service Jesus utilized in this last meeting with his disciples for the purpose of teaching the meaning of humility and the glory of humble service.

But in carrying out this solemn procedure, the Master found one objector. Petulant Peter, misunderstanding the purpose of the foot washing, resisted. "Thou shalt never wash my feet," were his hastily spoken words. How calmly did the Master reply, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me!"⁴ He who could not perceive the significance of the ceremony could by no means receive its spiritual meaning. Aroused by the Master's words, quickly Peter reversed himself: "not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." He wished for the fullest blessing of the lesson taught. Even the humble service of washing the feet thus conveyed the full significance of the lesson which the Master wished to convey.

Jesus was well aware that one at least of those present was not receptive to the precious lesson. "Ye are not all clean," shows unmistakable evidence that he was awake to the traitorous thought in their midst. Then in

⁴ John 13:8 ff.

simple words Jesus explained the meaning of what he had done. If he who had been accepted as the Messiah, as their Lord and Master, could perform so humble a service, how much greater was the obligation on their part to serve one another, even in an equally humble manner.

The servant is not greater than his master. The Son of God is not greater than the God who has sent him. Those who receive him as the Christ acknowledge God the Father. Then, momentarily heavy with the thought of what lay before him, Jesus discoursed upon the pending betrayal, indicating by the giving of a sop to him, who was to do the foul deed.

Judas, apparently aware that Jesus knew what he was about to do, withdrew, not to appear again until the moment of the arrest in the Garden. Freed of the presence of his betrayer, Jesus spoke in tenderest words to his dear companions. He was to depart from them. He was about to go where they could not follow. He was to suffer, and through that experience to rise to spiritual heights which they were little prepared to attain or to recognize. He squarely placed the proof of their love for him in their love for one another. Love of each other was thus posited as the basis of true discipleship. In these words of gentle admonition Jesus plainly indicated that his cause must rest with his disciples, the eleven who had stood by him through the stirring events of his ministry. Upon these fell the necessity of carrying forward the essence of his teaching, to insure the success of his mission. Unless the world believed and received the sacred purpose of his ministry and the profound significance of what was to follow, then would he have lived and suffered in vain. This realization called forth his tenderest admonition—they must love one another.

Referring to the Master's remarks that he was about to go away, to leave them, Peter impetuously inquired

where he was going. Again Jesus assured them that where he was going they could not follow. Not satisfied, Peter pursues his query. "Why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake."⁵ Poor Peter! Unstable, while loving the Master intensely, not yet sufficiently conscious of the Christ spirit to enable him to resist the temptations that would face him! Honest to the core, yet so little seasoned in the understanding of the forces of evil and with insufficient knowledge of what the Master had revealed to enable him to put aside personal safety, he was still governed by quick impulse, as a weathervane is blown about in the wind. How perfectly Jesus understood this type of mentality is made clear in his brief words, "The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice."⁶ Events that quickly followed proved the accuracy of his prediction.

The Synoptic Gospels give but slight account of the teachings which John so definitely sets forth in the four following chapters of his Gospel. So important are these teachings, so necessary to the gaining of the spiritual significance of Jesus' ministry, that it is quite inexplicable that the earlier biographies of the Nazarene gave so little attention to them. The plausible reasons for this omission may be found in the assumption that John possessed material not available to the authors of the Synoptics. Be that as it may, none can gainsay the priceless importance of the chapters which John injects between the close of the Last Supper, that is, of the ceremonial experience, and the adventure in the Garden of Gethsemane. The world would be vastly poorer without these words, teeming with vital importance to all ready to receive their holy message.

The last teachings of the Master prior to the resur-

⁵ John 13:37.

⁶ John 13:38.

rection are found in chapters 14, 15, 16 of the Fourth Gospel. Chapter 17 sets forth his prayer for the welfare of his disciples. These chapters contain the most comprehensive collection of the Master's teachings except the Sermon on the Mount; and, because of their spiritual significance, some scholars hold that they excel in value even that extraordinary compendium of right living. Uttered, as it appears, on the eve of the crucifixion, they convey the very essence of the Master's precepts. They are unexcelled in their spiritual import to humanity. If they constituted the only extant body of his messages, they would furnish a perfect way to the gaining of eternal life. Surely nothing could be of greater importance to mortals. They are poignantly priceless.

It is quite understandable that the disciples were in doubt as to the meaning of the words they had heard from the lips of one who spoke as never man spoke. They were bewildered and bemused in their uncertainty of what had been foretold of the experiences which were to befall their greatly loved Teacher. It was to them in this mental state, anxious, yet receptive, that these precious words were uttered. There is no measure of the comfort, peace, courage, joy, and hope which they have brought to waiting millions during the centuries of the Christian era. There is no phase of human woe that has not been relieved and comforted through their spiritual potency.

Intelligent acceptance of Jesus as the Christ heals the human heart of all troubled sense. Man in God's likeness is forever a dweller in the Father's house, the house of many mansions, spiritual consciousness, wherein man eternally abides. This Christ, Truth, received, accepted, becomes "the way, the truth, and the life,"⁷ whereby

⁷ John 14:6.

man enters into the holiest consciousness of his perfect selfhood as the Son of God.

The significance of these teachings was perceived in proportion to the mental preparedness of the listeners. There were still those among the disciples who had not awakened to the meaning of the Master's words. Philip, with vision still darkened, had failed to see that the Christ so often manifested in their presence was an emanation from God, that Jesus had in fact revealed God to them. It was his assurance of the presence of his Father, of God the creator of all, which had enabled Jesus to know the value of what he had revealed to them, and to do the great works of healing which had characterized his ministry, both in Galilee and Judea. Moreover, he who believes on (understands) him (Jesus), who recognizes the facts of his existence, that he truly came from and manifests the Father, shall do the works that he is doing. They will even do greater works, not greater in kind—that would be quite impossible—but greater in the sense of being wider spread through improved means of transmission of his teachings that would develop through the centuries. These teachings, properly understood through the discovery of Divine Science, would bear fruit whenever received and practiced.

The success of this world-wide healing ministry would be the proof of their love for him. Only thus would his commandments be kept. Only through strict adherence to his teachings could they do the works which he did. His ministry was the ministry of love, selfless and impartial. His followers, to repeat his works, must love as he had loved. They must love him, his spiritual nature, humanly manifested, as he had loved them.

Now was the opportune time to apprise his devoted companions that although he was to depart, they would not be left comfortless. He would pray to the Father,

who would send another Comforter, "the Spirit of truth."⁸ Here is the heart of one of Jesus' most important teachings. He, the human Jesus, the man of Galilee, would go away, but in his place would appear the Comforter which would abide with them forever; and this would eventuate in answer to the Master's prayer.

This Comforter, this "Spirit of truth," is the Holy Ghost, the Christ, Truth, which is ever present and ever available as the perfect healer of all discord, available to meet every human need. This Christ, Truth, the full expression of God, of divine Mind, is the truth about all reality, the truth about God, about man, and the universe of spiritual ideas. This Comforter has ever been, is now and forever will be present, and is available through spiritual understanding to solve all humanity's problems, to overcome every form of discord, to redeem the sinful, even to raise the dead. It was this same Comforter, this identical "Spirit of truth," that enabled Jesus to restore the young man at Nain, to raise Lazarus, to heal the leper, to restore the paralytic, in short, to overcome error in its every phase.

Jesus assured his disciples that God, the Father, would love those who loved him. Perfect logic. Since God is Love, his manifestation, Christ and man, expresses Love and is the reflection of Love. Moreover, since Love is infinite, man is never apart from or out of the presence of Love. Whittier was sure of this when he wrote:

"I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care."

To be out of the presence of infinite Love is an impossibility.

⁸ John 14:17.

Furthermore, this Comforter would become their great Teacher, would, in fact, teach them all things. Why? Because, as the emanation from God, from infinite Mind, this "Spirit of truth" is the expression or reflection of that divine consciousness which knows all, is conscious of all reality. Hence this Christ, Truth, this Comforter, as the manifestation of Mind, is intelligent, and knows all. The expression of infinite intelligence could scarcely be less than infinitely intelligent, that is, conscious of all. And this Comforter would bring peace, not the peace of the world based upon the belief that the universe is material, but founded upon the great fact that in the infinite Mind (from which emanates the Comforter) peace, harmony, love eternally reign. Into this state of consciousness, strife, discord, disorder can never enter. That Jesus' consciousness had become so spiritualized that error was excluded, his closing words of the chapter signify: the prince of this world would come but would find nothing in the mentality of Jesus in common with him. No longer was he to entertain material beliefs, aggressive mental suggestions.

It appears that with his disciples he then moved elsewhere, continuing his discourse in some other location. The fifteenth chapter of John opens with a beautiful allegory, vividly setting forth the inseparable relationship between the Christ and their true selfhood as the children of God. The true vine, the Christ, Truth, is the direct emanation from God the Father, the creator and sustainer of the universe. God is the husbandman, the one who plants and tends the vine. Whatever in human consciousness is unlike the Father is purged, cast out and destroyed by the incoming Christ, Truth. But all held in consciousness that is pure and perfect is from the Father and is unfolded, cherished, and protected by omnipresent Love. Whatever abides in the Christ is blessed; all else is cast out. Only that which emanates

from God is worthy, is permanent. Such emanation develops, unfolds; it is the vine that bears much fruit.

In tenderest terms Jesus tells how these dear companions may continue in his love, to be a fruitful vine—by keeping his commandments. Assuredly! For in no other way could they receive the Comforter than through the way of love and life. And he defines the perfect type of love. There is no greater love than that which inspires to the laying down of one's life for another. That willingness to give up the material sense of life in human service is the greatest exemplification of perfect love.

JESUS' LAST WORDS TO HIS DISCIPLES COLLECTIVELY

It was also at this exalted experience that Jesus chose to denominate his loved disciples as friends, not as servants, since he was disclosing to them his deepest thoughts, the spiritual link which bound him to the Father. He was revealing to them his true nature, the very Christ, which bound him indissolubly to God. Once they had learned of this holy relationship, no longer could they be regarded as servants. "For all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."⁹

Jesus assures these friends that he has chosen them for a definite purpose—to carry on the works which he has established. If the activity of the spirit of truth in human consciousness was to terminate with his departure, then would his mission as Saviour and Redeemer have failed. To continue his ministry there must be those who, through having received his teachings, had breathed in the spirit of his ministry, and had seen positive and indisputable proof of the healing and redemptive power of

⁹ John 15:15.

the Christ which he so fully manifested. To his utmost, he was preparing these faithful followers to carry on his works. The glow that he had lighted in the hearts of humanity must be brightened and intensified, not permitted to smoulder and die out.

Jesus well knew the hatred these ministers of the New Faith would encounter. The same murderous motives which were to attempt his destruction would in turn be loosed upon them. Upon those who would combat the dogmas and vested privileges of the religious hierarchy which had grown to such proportions in Jewry would be centered the malice and hatred of the carnal mind. These ministers of the new day need hardly expect to escape the persecution which had been heaped upon Jesus. If they themselves failed to gain a clear concept of the spiritual nature of his mission, they could scarcely convey its tremendous significance to suffering, burdened humanity. Had they not witnessed his works wrought through the healing power of the Christ, had they not heard his words, the most precious that ever fell from human lips, they would not have awakened to the sins that so commonly beset humanity, would not have been conscious that their own lives were sinful. But now that the Christ has been revealed to humanity, they who have refused to accept the truth have no cover, "no cloke,"¹⁰ for their sin. Henceforth their sin is willful, not indulged through ignorance. "He that hateth me hateth my Father also." How far reaching is this disobedience! Even to the extent of hating God, the Creator of all. Truly could Jesus declare, "They hated me without a cause."

The persecution which Jesus foresaw would befall his friends would intensify to such a degree that the

¹⁰ John 15:22 ff.

destruction of these ministers to the Christ would be regarded as loyalty to Jehovah. Thus definitely was their fate foretold, and all because the people had failed to see that he was God's representative, that through him the Christ was revealed to the world. He could not have told all this to his disciples in the early days of his ministry; they were not then prepared to receive it and might have been turned away. But now, having been so long in his presence, having heard his incomparable words, having witnessed his many mighty works, they were prepared to go forward with the ministry which soon would devolve upon them. Apparently Jesus did not make known again his conviction that in his hour of greatest peril they would fall down.

"All things that the Father hath are mine."¹¹ Here in words of light does Jesus proclaim the Christ, his divine nature, as the full expression of the Godhead. All inherent in the Father is expressed in the Christ. Consciousness of this fact enabled Jesus to take and hold his exalted position. It made him superior to every claim of error, to every phase of material belief.

The Master realized that he had often spoken to them in parables. But his promise was that he would reveal the Father to them so definitely that they could scarcely fail to gain the import of his career. The disciples, exalted by his tender and incisive words, declared their assurance of his origin. He surely was from the Father. But Jesus was not misled. He knew there was still a lack of that degree of faith based upon understanding which in the years to come they would sorely need to hearten them and enable them to face with fortitude and calmness every form of persecution mortal mind could bring upon them, even death itself.

¹¹ John 16:15.

The Master did all that could be done to assure his friends of the final peace which they would gain through learning of God through His Christ. Peace through spiritual understanding was their blessed destiny. For himself, he had overcome the tribulations attendant upon human experience. His clear concept of the Father and of His relation to His children had lifted him above the possibility of being overthrown by the machinations of evil, however intensified, however cruelly administered.

The seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel is devoted to the most comprehensive, the most beautiful, and yet the most poignant prayer ever recorded. It touches a degree of sublimity unparalleled in all the Gospels. If there were no other proof that John of all the disciples most fully comprehended the spirit of the Christ which was so plainly manifested, these sacred words would carry complete conviction. Here are sounded the very depths of the Master's supreme understanding of the nature and character of the Father and of his relationship to Him, the divine Source of his being.

Jesus sought sanctification that he might perform the holy mission confronting him with the greatest degree of success. These dear ones listening to his appeal must receive of the very essence of Truth. There must be removed every trace of doubt, every trace of uncertainty, as to the divine Presence and of Jesus' relationship, yea his Sonship, with God: ". . . glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee."¹² From the Father he had received that understanding, that power, which had enabled him to overcome the flesh, all claims of the carnal mind; and this understanding had been utilized for the purpose of enabling him to give eternal life to as many as had received the divine inspiration and message.

¹² John 17:1 ff.

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

Here in crystal-clear words are set forth two facts of sublimest importance to humanity: that God is eternal Life; and that through knowledge of God as exemplified in the life and demonstration of Christ Jesus, mortals may lay hold of that Life. God is Life, the only Source of existence, and it inevitably follows that man in God's likeness, the image of eternal Life, possesses that Life by virtue of his existence as likeness. Nothing that connotes destruction and death can by any possibility be expressive of, or the likeness of, infinite and eternal Life. No more precious words have ever been uttered than these. When their true significance is gained, mankind is ushered into that state of consciousness without beginning and without end, that life everlasting for which the human heart unceasingly yearns, and which, when gained, brings joy incomparable and fadeless.

Goodspeed's translation of this passage is illuminating: "And eternal life means knowing you as the only true God, and knowing Jesus, your messenger, as Christ." The words "Jesus" and "Christ," clarify the statement. Harnack said that knowing God makes man the son of God. It is not knowledge of Jesus as the human, but as the Christ, the spiritual Truth, which he so perfectly expressed, that gains eternal life. Therefore, Jesus' glorious words, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."¹³ And the only way to the Father is through the recognition of his divine nature as the Christ, the emanation from God. Through understanding this, knowledge of God is gained, and man thus knows himself as the son of God, co-existent and co-eternal with God. Man exists forever as God's likeness or expression, and when

¹³ John 14:6.

this understanding of God as Life and man's relation to God is acquired, mortals drop the swaddling clothes of materiality to become the glorious children of God.

Jesus calls upon the Father to bless his dear friends as God has blessed him. He has done the works which God gave him to do. Now he seeks the same glory, the same honor, which was his before ever the world existed. Here are words which precisely state the fact of Jesus' co-existence with God, his existence before the world of matter ever came into material belief. Not the human Jesus, but his spiritual selfhood as the Son of God, his oneness with the Christ, is eternal. For God has never been without His representative.

Jesus constantly directed the thought of his students to God, the Father. "I can of mine own self do nothing"¹⁴ had been his constant declaration. Now they are convinced that Jesus as the Christ came from God. Thus had he fulfilled his mission as teacher. Since he is fully cognizant that his divine nature, the Christ, is the full manifestation, likeness of the Godhead, he knows that whatever inheres in God is in His expression, Christ. Hence, "all mine are thine, and thine are mine,"¹⁵ words incomprehensible without the understanding of the Christ. He had been able through his spiritual understanding to protect them, to keep them from the evil. Now that he was to leave them, he prayed that the Father might continue to care for, bless, and protect them.

The one who was to betray Jesus was fulfilling Scripture. Jesus assures the Father that his dear ones, instructed by his words and example, are not worldly. They have gained the heavenly vision. He asks not that these be taken from the world, for they have the holy purpose to carry forward his works. But he asks that

¹⁴ John 5:30.

¹⁵ John 17:10.

they may be kept from the evil, protected in the sacred ministry ahead. Let divine Truth consecrate them, as it has consecrated him. He would bring to these, his true friends, all the blessings which have accrued to him because of his consciousness of the Source of his being and his oneness with that Source.

Jesus' prayer for unity with the Father was not limited to his immediate followers. It was for all those who, through his own ministry and that of his disciples, should come to believe on him, that he was the Christ, sent of God to redeem the world. His petition embraced all Christendom, the multitude vast and unnumbered, who, through his teachings and the ministry carried afield by his faithful disciples, should come into that sense of unity with the Father which arises only from understanding God, His Christ, and man in His likeness. Man's unity with the Father inevitably accompanies the gaining of this understanding.

Again Jesus asserts the pre-existence of his spiritual selfhood: "For Thou hast loved me before the creation of the world."¹⁶ That he has manifested God to the disciples and to all prepared to receive his words, he again asserts. He will continue in this ministry of interpreting God to men to insure that these chosen ones may partake of that ineffable love which he has received from the Father, and that this love for him may also abide with them. These words close the prayer which, above all other words of the Master, signifies man's unity with God.

The meal finished, the final words uttered, Jesus arose and said, "Let us go hence." Out into the night they went, passing close to the Temple area, and, proceeding through the wall by the eastern gate, crossed again the

¹⁶ John 17:24.

Cedron and ascended the slope of Olivet, where lay the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus, alone or with his disciples, had often resorted there during his visits to the Holy City. Across the shoulder of the hill ran the path often trod by the Nazarene when bent upon visiting his friends in Bethany.

Had Jesus been even slightly desirous of escaping from the hands of his enemies, he had ample opportunity to do so. Had he not quickly withdrawn himself from impending danger on divers occasions? Could he not have exercised the same power to protect himself from this imminent arrest, the power that he had exercised so often in laying various forms of evil? But, no! He knew and faced the dangers with full knowledge of all it meant to him in the experience of mortal suffering.

The query has often arisen in the centuries since that most tragic scene enacted on the slopes of Olivet: Could Jesus have fulfilled his mission as Revelator of God to men without the experiences of Gethsemane and Calvary? The answer is obvious. By what means could he have proved his words about eternal Life, Life indestructible and permanent, without positive proof, proof so impressively presented that none could doubt its authenticity? He must pursue his ministry to the end, submit to the most cruel of all tortures, submit without resistance to the direst ignominy, to insult and castigation, before the final scene at the Cross. Is it any wonder that, conscious of what lay ahead, he should wish to withdraw to the quiet of Gethsemane, there to gain renewed assurance of the Father's love and protection?

XXVI

The Betrayal, Trial, and Crucifixion

ON THE slopes of Olivet, Jesus was on familiar ground. He had often come, as we have seen, to this place of peace and quiet, for prayer and refreshment apart from the throngs of the teeming city. It was therefore quite natural that he should have repaired to this spot, made sacred as the scene of his devotions, to prepare for the greatest of all ordeals which he was about to face. Judas must have known that Jesus, as was his wont, would seek the solitude of Olivet, for it was to this spot that he directed the emissaries of the High Priest.

Arrived at that portion of the Mount termed Gethsemane, Jesus asked his followers to remain at a certain spot; and, taking Peter, James, and John, he went aside to pray. Asking the three to watch with him, he withdrew from them and knelt in prayer, pouring out to the Father the very anguish of his soul. In this hour of stress, facing the great tragedy, he rose above all human desire to that exalted state where he could submit to divine Will. "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt,"¹ words which have become indelible in the minds of hosts of Christian followers when, confronted with anguish of heart, they faced persecution and tribulation.

The prayer spoken, Jesus turns to the three he had left to watch, and, to his surprise, finding them asleep, ex-

¹ Matthew 26:39 ff.

claims to Peter, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" The disciples, still unaware of the tragedy just ahead, heavy, perhaps, with the supper, or overcome by sorrow, had yielded to the natural impulse, wholly unconscious of the Master's mental struggle. Apropos of their failure to obey his injunction, he gently admonished them, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Although still observant of their weaknesses, yet he would attribute it to material causes, not to indifference born of ignorance of what was pending. Compassion was ever the quality of Jesus' thought.

Still seeking the calmness of thought and fortitude necessary to face the events now rushing upon him, Jesus again withdrew from the presence of his faithless three, praying anew that the Father's will be done, if the cup he was about to drink could not pass from him. The struggle was tremendous. Jesus was yet a man in the flesh, and the flesh recoiled from the terrible ordeal. But his spiritual sense, the Christ, opposed to the struggle of the material senses and overpowering them, emerged victorious. The battle was won. Truth triumphed. He was prepared to go forward with a serenity and magnanimity the like of which the world has never known.

Again he found his disciples heavy with slumber. Once more he withdrew to pray, stabilizing his concept of the Christ, his true selfhood, as beyond the reach of human persecution. He knew that whatever cruelty might be visited upon the material body, no least touch of mortal fury or vindictiveness could reach his spiritual selfhood, that expression of the Christ, forever "hid with Christ in God."² Again returning to his sleeping

² Colossians 3:3.

friends, fully conscious that his mental victory had been won, he found them still asleep. "The Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."³

Jesus had no slightest doubt as to the fate that he faced, nor was he ignorant of the quality of thought that was pursuing him. His ability to read the signs of the time enabled him fully to foreknow the trend of events. With no hesitation he faced the future. So completely had he gained the sense of perfect unity with the Father that he was prepared for all eventualities. Now he urged his followers to go forward with him, conscious of the details of the events about to transpire.

Immediately, it seems, Judas appeared, accompanied by an armed group sent by the chief priests and elders to arrest Jesus. Fulfilling the miserable part he had agreed to play for a paltry thirty pieces of silver, Judas, having told the guard that he would do this, approached Jesus and kissed him, saying, "Hail, master."⁴ Jesus inquired of them as to the purpose of their coming. Their answer was to seize him. One of the disciples, stirred to deepest resentment at these signs of violence shown to his beloved Lord and Master, drew his sword and struck wildly at the guards, cutting off the ear of one of the servants. To meet violence with violence was far from Jesus' thought. So he ordered the disciple to put up his sword, adding the significant words, ". . . for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. And he touched his ear, and healed him."⁵

Apparently to impress the crowd with his command of an unseen power, equal to overcoming his oppressors if it were his desire, he uttered a statement that has given thought to countless students of Jesus' words. "Think-

³ Matthew 26:45.

⁴ Matthew 26:49.

⁵ Matthew 26:52.

est thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"⁶ Words could scarcely convey firmer conviction that divine aid was at hand and available to secure his release, to overwhelm his enemies, did he care to invoke it. But this action would defeat the Scriptural prophecy which had foretold his fate. Yet he would not let pass the opportunity for a just rebuke. Why had they come to him as though he were a criminal? Why had they not taken him when he was with them daily teaching in the Temple? No answer is recorded. Even the guard was stricken in conscience to arrest this man whose fame had gone far and wide, whose words and deeds had so deeply impressed the multitude.

At this juncture occurred an event as significant as it seems surprising. "Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled."⁷ Viewed from the standpoint of Christendom, that these beloved disciples and friends, these dear ones to whom Jesus had revealed the deep things of God, to whom had been exhibited an unprecedented depth of love and compassion, an understanding of God and His Christ, which had enabled him to heal lepers and restore the dead, to walk on the waters and blast the fig tree—that these, who had journeyed with him through desert heat and winter snow could have at the first exhibition of danger fled ignominiously, leaving him in the hands of enemies, seems incomprehensible. Only one explanation appears to offer a reason at all adequate. They had failed to catch the deep spiritual import of his life, of his teachings and works. They had not then caught the vision of the Christ, which later became the inspiration which carried them forward in their highest endeavor to sow the seed which had ripened from Jesus' ministry.

⁶ Luke 22:51.

⁷ Matthew 26:56.

Carnal mind, unillumined by spiritual light, was ever a coward, was ever unstable and fearful.

Events followed rapidly upon each other. Immediately Jesus was taken by the guards to Caiaphas, the high priest, where already the elders and scribes were assembled, proof of the careful planning of the arrest and trial of the Master. The leaders of the synagogue, the ritualistic fathers, not the powers of Rome, had planned and were about to execute the dastardly deed just ahead. One disciple, at least, had followed the crowd which conducted Jesus to the synagogue. Peter, conscience-smitten that he had failed the Master, went along, but "far off."⁸ He was yet fearful that he might be accused as an accomplice and suffer persecution with the Master.

The effort to pin upon Jesus some degree of blasphemy that would justify his destruction caused his accusers to bring false witnesses whose testimony, however, was far from adequate. Many would-be betrayers came, but none were of a character to justify their purpose. Others must be sought. At last this malefactor, this destroyer of their age-old religion, this blasphemer, was in their hands, and he must not be permitted to escape! The end was so important, they believed, as to justify the means, however false.

At last came one who testified that he had heard this fellow say, "I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days."⁹ This stirred Caiaphas to demand of Jesus whether he had uttered such blasphemy. Notwithstanding their determination to destroy the Nazarene, however, they dared not refuse him at least a semblance of justice. He must be given the opportunity to answer their charges.

Manifest throughout this procedure is evidence that

⁸ Matthew 26:58.

⁹ Matthew 26:61.

the powers in control had a lurking fear of the masses. Jesus had impressed many that he was sent of God, that he was the veritable Messiah. How widespread was this sentiment regarding him, and how deep the impression had become, they knew not; and this very uncertainty led them to proceed with a degree of caution.

"But Jesus held his peace." The high priest even challenged Jesus to state whether the report was true that he had declared himself to be the Christ, Son of God. The demand elicited a reply from Jesus, but not an acknowledgment beyond placing the burden of the accusation upon the accuser. And he added an apocalyptic statement which has caused unceasing discussion. "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."¹⁰ There are scholars who declare this to be an interpolation. But it is perfectly evident that Paul accepted it as authentic, for he repeated it with expectancy of its eventuation.

So closely do these words of the Master relate to what followed, that it appears to represent the actual words of Jesus. Whatever they see fit to do with his human personality, its destruction will by no means end his influence. The Christ, exalted even to the clouds, will reappear with power which none may destroy. This appearance of the Christ, ever at hand to meet humanity's needs, to assuage its griefs, to heal its diseases, to forgive and eliminate its sins, is the way of salvation, the only way, in fulfillment of Jesus' declaration, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."¹¹

Jesus' words stirred the high priest to the quick. So excited became he at this declaration that, in Oriental style, he rent his clothes and shouted: "He has spoken

¹⁰ Matthew 26:64.

¹¹ John 14:6.

blasphemy. That is sufficient. No further testimony is needed." The high priest then appealed to the council, which answered as he anticipated, "He deserves death."¹² Incited by this verdict, the crowd surged around, insulting Jesus in various ways significant of contempt and cruelty. They even dared him to prove his claim to be the Christ by telling who had struck him.

At this juncture Peter comes into the rapidly unfolding drama. Outside in the courtyard, whence he had gone during the examination of Jesus, he is accused first by one maid and then another of having been with Jesus. Peter denies any such relationship. But he is not left to himself. His denials are not accepted. Presently some of the bystanders declare that he was certainly a follower of this malefactor, for his accent betrays him as a Galilean. Peter, fearful of the results of these accusations, uses strong language in making his denials. As he has thrice denied any connection with the Nazarene, the cock crows. It was the morning hour. Peter remembers that Jesus had told him that, notwithstanding his protests of loyalty, yet before the cock should hail the next dawn, he would thrice deny him. Peter, remembering, goes outside and weeps bitterly.

Poor Peter! Regardless of his impetuous sense of loyalty to Jesus, honestly felt and for the moment honestly declared, yet, when the hour of trial came, his human sense of safety led him to such ignominious denials. But that Peter in the years after fully redeemed himself through his awakened understanding of the Christ, there is common conviction.

With the coming of the day, the council and chief priests held a meeting to determine the fate of Jesus. Now that he had of himself uttered words that justified

¹² Matthew 26:65, 66.

his death, the question before them was just how should this be brought about. There was need to mollify the people. Always in the background was a lurking fear of the multitude, which maintained some sense, however inchoate, that every accused person should be dealt with fairly.

The procedure that followed has a double significance. The authority of the council and the high priest did not seem sufficient to justify the final disposition of the case. Moreover, they lacked courage to execute their desires. They were conscience-stricken, for deep in their hearts was a lurking suspicion that they were engaged in a monstrous thing. A brilliant idea struck them. If they could invoke the hated power of Rome, they would at least be removed from the responsibility of the final enactment. It was ever thus. Criminality ever strives to escape responsibility for its crimes. So they took the next step. They bound Jesus and took him before Pilate, the procurator representing Rome in questions involving life and death.

An impressive incident here enters the drama. Judas, who has been witness to the scene before Caiaphas and the meeting that followed, is stricken with remorse. The evidence that Jesus is condemned, is liable to be executed, comes to him in a terrible flood of regrets. What has he done for a mere pittance in money and momentary praise from the council! He brings back the money, with the assertion that he has done wrong. This man is innocent of the crimes charged against him. But these determined accusers are not ready even to recognize the significance of his admission. They will have nothing to do with it. They are not to be turned from their nefarious purpose.

Judas, stunned at their hardness of heart, throws the silver at their feet and rushes forth to destroy himself.

The surge of remorse and repentance for his crime was too much for the poor man. He could not bear to see the hideous drama to its certain end. So he hanged himself to escape his accusing conscience. An interesting incident regarding the disposal of the money is interpolated in the account of the rapidly unfolding events. The money of betrayal was used to buy the Potter's Field as a burial place for the poor and strangers for whose bodies no other disposal was provided. This ground has been called the Field of Blood, thus fulfilling a prophecy of Jeremiah.

Meantime, Jesus is brought before the Roman governor, who accosts him, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" Jesus replies, "Thou sayest."¹³ Then Pilate repeats a list of the charges brought by the high priests and elders. To these Jesus makes no answer. Pilate, surprised at the silence, asks if he is not hearing the charges brought against him. But Jesus remains silent, and Pilate's surprise intensifies. Here is a state of mind with which he is not familiar.

Now the priests and elders adopt different tactics. It is customary for the governor to release at the time of such festivals some criminal for whom the populace should plead. The name of Barabbas, a notorious criminal, was in the thought of the people, and they plead for him. Pilate, unhappy as to the charges against Jesus, sees a possible chance to escape the responsibility of pronouncing upon him the sentence of death. He asks whether he should release Barabbas or Jesus, the so-called Christ. It is evident that Pilate sensed the hatred which was pursuing Jesus to destroy him, and he resisted it. His reluctance to yield to the desires of the priests and elders was strengthened by a message received from his

¹³ Matthew 27:11.

wife to have nothing to do with the persecution and destruction of this man, whose innocence had been revealed to her in a dream.

The Gospel accounts are somewhat at variance as to the details of that momentous night, but the general facts are the same. John relates that after the arrest Jesus was first taken before Annas, an ex-high priest, father-in-law of Caiaphas, high priest at that time. Then Annas, having heard the complaints against the Master, directed that he be bound and taken before Caiaphas his son, who in turn ordered him before Pilate. It was during this first appearance that, according to John, the memorable conversation took place between the Roman procurator and the Nazarene. The Jews, it appears, did not enter the judgment hall, where Jesus was taken before Pilate, for fear of defilement, as it was the beginning of the day of the Passover. Accordingly, Pilate went outside to inquire as to the accusations against the man. Pilate told the accusers to take Jesus away and deal with him according to their law. They demurred. Nothing less than the death of Jesus would satisfy them, and their law did not permit his execution.

When Pilate returned to the judgment hall, where Jesus had been held while the procurator was outside, he questioned Jesus sharply, "Art thou the King of the Jews?"¹⁴ Jesus answered by asking Pilate whether that was his own thought, or had someone told him? Pilate replied, "Am I a Jew?" His own people had accused him. What had he done? Jesus' reply was of a mystical nature, quite above the grasp of the material mentality of the Roman. "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

¹⁴ John 18:33 ff.

Pilate, still failing to comprehend the words of the Master, inquired, "Art thou a king then?" To this Jesus replied, "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." Stirred by Jesus' mystical statement, Pilate uttered that most pregnant question which has echoed down the centuries, "What is truth?" Knowing that that was no time or place to enter upon so important a discourse, the Master made no reply. Even his silence in the face of his inquisitor was impressive.

Luke introduces an incident which does not elsewhere appear. At Pilate's first interview with the accusers of the Nazarene, one of them made mention of Galilee as one of the localities in which Jesus had stirred up the people. This led the procurator to inquire if Jesus was a Galilean. When told that he was, immediately Pilate saw his way out of the situation from which he was anxious to extricate himself. Now Galilee was under the rule of Herod Antipas as Governor, and he was in Jerusalem for the Passover. Pilate would send the accused man to Herod. If Herod would take the responsibility of determining his fate, Pilate would be relieved of the whole disagreeable business. Throughout the affair it is evident that Pilate did not agree with or accept the charges against Jesus. He would gladly have set him free. But he dared not for fear of danger to his official standing.

Herod, it seems, was pleased to have Jesus brought before him. He had heard much of the Master's works in Galilee but had not before seen him. Furthermore, it appears that Herod had been somewhat impressed by the accounts of Jesus' healing works, for the account says that Herod hoped that he would be witness to one of these miracles. To Herod's profuse questioning, Jesus made no answer. He knew it was of no use. The die

was cast. No defense of his would prevent the impending fate. Impressed by the violent accusations against the Nazarene, Herod ordered him to be clad in a gorgeous robe and returned to Pilate. Herod no more than the procurator cared to be guilty of sending this man to the cross.

When Jesus was returned to Pilate, the procurator again declared to the chief priests and rulers that he could find no evidence that the man had committed a crime worthy of the sentence of death. No more had Herod. And Pilate washed his hands in a basin of water as evidence that he was free from the whole affair. But this by no means satisfied the accusers. They were out to do away with this menace to their traditional rites and doctrines. He must be destroyed. Pilate was willing to chastise the accused, but that would not suffice. Nothing but his death would satisfy the malicious intent which stirred them.

And so Pilate weakened in his hope to escape the responsibility of sentencing Jesus to death. When the accusation was hurled against Pilate that this man was stirring up sedition against the authority of the Empire and unless he acceded to their demands, he was disloyal to Caesar, he was no longer able to hold out against them. And so Pilate, having scourged him, sent Jesus to the Cross. And Barabbas, the murderer, was released.

Once sentence had been pronounced upon him, the soldiers took Jesus to the outer hall, where he was clothed with a scarlet robe. In further mockery, they platted a crown of thorns and put it upon his head and placed a reed in his hand, symbol of kingly authority. These and many other indignities Jesus suffered. The cruel nature of the soldiers satisfied, he was again clothed in his own garments and taken out of the hall. Outside was found a strong man, a bystander, named Simon of Cyrene. He

was forced to carry the heavy cross which meantime had been brought by the maddened mob.

Over the winding course now known as the *via dolorosa* the procession took its way until it reached a hill known as Golgotha, and there Jesus was crucified. It had been the custom to offer to those sentenced to the most horrible of all tortures, death by crucifixion, a sedative, in some measure to allay the suffering. Matthew states that vinegar and gall was offered to Jesus, but, having tasted, he refused to drink it. And so this holiest of men, this revelator of God, was crucified between two thieves. Mortal malice did its worst. It had, it believed, put away forever him whom the hierarchy had come to regard with a murderous intent that nothing but death on the cross would satisfy.

Even in his hour of agony they continued to mock and insult him. Above his head the soldiers set up a sign bearing an inscription: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."¹⁵ And they reviled him and mocked him with his own words. Let this God whom he had so often proclaimed, whose Son he had declared himself to be, let this God rescue him now. Even the thieves mocked him with his own words.

Matthew states that for a period darkness overspread the whole earth, and at the ninth hour Jesus aroused himself, crying, "Eli, Eli lama sabachthani," which has commonly been interpreted, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"¹⁶ These words are thought to have been repeated from the twenty-second Psalm. When he cried again with a loud voice, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," he "gave up the ghost."¹⁷ In the midst of the agony and indignity which Jesus was suffering, a plea went up to God the Father, a plea which has

¹⁵ Matthew 27:37.

¹⁶ Matthew 27:46.

¹⁷ Luke 23:46.

stirred the heart of uncounted millions in the the centuries since, for it sought divine pardon for the most heinous crime of all time, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."¹⁸

To make doubly sure that Jesus had died, soldiers pierced his side. From the record it appears that even among the cruel soldiers was at least one who had glimpsed something of the Christ which the crucified man had manifested. This centurion glorified God, saying, "Certainly this was a righteous man."¹⁹

It appears that at the moment when Jesus gave up the ghost a convulsion occurred that is commonly believed to have been a severe earthquake. "The veil of the temple was rent in twain . . . the earth did quake, and the rocks rent."²⁰ Matthew states that even the graves of the saints were opened and the bodies arose and went into the city. There is a tradition that the synagogue at Capernaum in which Jesus had healed and taught was destroyed by the earthquake. At any rate, it now is in a state of ruin which might well have been caused by an earth convulsion at that time.

The soldiers, having stripped the body of Jesus, proceeded to divide his garments among them. Witnessing the whole procedure were several women who had come out with the crowd from the city. Among these were Mary Magdalene, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Jesus' mother, Mary. John states that on the Cross when Jesus saw his mother and the others standing by with the beloved disciple (John), he said, "Woman, behold thy son!" and to John, "Behold thy mother."²¹ And thereafter John made an abode for her in his own home.

Events moved rapidly. The Jews were anxious to

¹⁸ Luke 23:34.

¹⁹ Luke 23:47.

²⁰ Matthew 27:51.

²¹ John 19:25, 26.

have the terrible work brought to a speedy end. Their malice had, as they believed, worked its cruel purpose. Little did they realize that this was but the beginning, the first act of a drama that would revolutionize the thinking of the world; that there would follow the most significant event in the world's history. To a people sunk in the depths of materiality there could have been no shadow cast before.

Scarcely had the crucifixion, as it was believed, done its work, when there appeared on the scene a man who has become known as Joseph of Arimathea. Of this man little is known, but tradition has built around him a considerable structure. Scholars believe that he was a wealthy Israelite, a member of the Sanhedrin; that although he had been a believer in the teachings of Jesus and mentally a follower, yet he had never openly espoused the Nazarene's cause. There is no record of his having had a part in the accusations against Jesus, nor did he defend him. Apparently his prudence had kept him in the background.

Be that as it may, after the crucifixion, Joseph went to Pilate with the request that he be allowed to dispose of the body. We can easily visualize the alacrity with which the request was granted. Pilate welcomed the removal of the last vestige of the ghastly tragedy. With the aid of bystanders, the body was removed from the Cross, and, after the customary preparation, was placed in a tomb cut from the rock in Joseph's garden near Calvary. With this act of mercy and reverence, Joseph disappears from the Bible narrative, but not from the realm of tradition.

In England there persists a very pleasing tradition connecting Joseph with the founding of the magnificent cathedral at Glastonbury, now an impressive ruin. Joseph was a merchant, runs the tradition, who came to

Cornwall for a supply of tin, a metal which the mines of Cornwall yielded to commerce even in that distant day. Joseph and a dozen companions landed near the Bristol Channel, were received by the King, a Briton, Arviragus by name. Although not accepting the type of religion which they presented to him, the king did grant them a building site for a chapel on the Isle of Marsh. A chapel was built of wattles, the beginning of the great cathedral, and tradition holds that this event marked the introduction of Christianity in England. It is alleged that these events followed close upon the crucifixion.

Another member of the Sanhedrin who assisted Joseph in the burial was Nicodemus, the Israelite who early in Jesus' ministry had come to him by night to ask for an explanation of certain of the Master's teachings. He, too, apparently afraid to speak in the Nazarene's behalf, had been a silent witness to the trial and execution. Cowardice has kept many a believer from publicly proclaiming and defending the disciple of Truth. Fear for personal safety has been a frequent deterrent in the spread and demonstration of the great truths which Jesus taught and so impressively demonstrated. There has been many a Joseph, many a Nicodemus who has appeared on the scene after the danger had passed. Many, willing to partake of the blessings, have been reluctant to have part in the trying days when the planting was fraught with danger.

It must be said of Nicodemus, however, that on one occasion he raised his voice in protest, however faintly, against the rising tide of persecution. When Jesus was in Jerusalem to attend the Feast of Tabernacles, the Sanhedrin, of which Nicodemus was a member, gave serious attention to the doings of the Master. In the midst of the discussions as to what measures could wisely be taken against this stirrer-up of the people, Nicodemus

raised the query: Does our law judge a man until he be given a chance to appear and answer any accusations against him? Thus it is evident that his previous experience with Jesus had left some impression upon him.

The body safely and reverently bestowed in the tomb, the disciples went about with heavy hearts. Their beloved Teacher and friend, he who had spoken to them words of the most serious import, had been horribly crucified and his body placed in a tomb after the common manner of the day. They were stunned, disheartened, dismayed. They had accepted the evidence of material sense, that his glorious career had come to untimely end.

We who have lived in the ineffable light of the resurrection can scarcely conceive of the depth of the despair into which this devoted little band had fallen from the onrushing finale of their exalted hopes. He, the Messiah, the anointed one, he whom Peter had so understandingly characterized as "the Christ, the Son of the living God," had reached a sudden and ignominious end. Heavy was the gloom, dark was the way, a darkness into which penetrated no ray of light, no trace of hope. Only in this recognition of their mental state can we understand the state of exaltation which followed upon the rapidly succeeding events.

XXVII

The Resurrection and Ascension

THE crucifixion and burial had occurred on Friday. We have no record of the events of the following day. But there soon came a sudden and startling change. At the end of the Sabbath, as the light of the following day began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, went to the tomb with spices to anoint Jesus' body. Their affection still centered upon the human Jesus, from whose lips had fallen such healing words of love. Who would help them to roll away the stone with which the opening into the sepulcher had been closed? Little wonder that they were astonished when they found that already the stone had been removed. Who could have done it? Entering, they found a young man clothed in white, sitting at one side. No wonder they were frightened. Observing their fear, the young man undertook to calm them, saying "Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him."¹

The gospel accounts of what happened at the sepulcher differ widely, yet all agree upon the one essential—the resurrection of Jesus' physical body. The body had disappeared from the tomb, and later Jesus presented himself at divers times and places. Matthew associates a great earthquake with the appearance of an angel of the Lord, who rolled away the stone from the opening in the

¹ Mark 16:6.

sepulcher and sat upon it. He describes the angel thus: "His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow."²

The keepers of the sepulcher were sore afraid, but their fears were allayed by the words of the angel. "He is not here: for he is risen."³ Thereupon he instructed the women who had seen the empty tomb to hasten and tell the news to the disciples that Jesus was not dead but would go before them into Galilee, where they would see him. As they hastened on their way to carry out the instructions of the angel, Jesus himself approached, saying, "All hail."⁴ They worshiped him and clasped his feet.

The presence of keepers at the tomb, to whom Matthew refers, came about in this wise. On the Saturday following the crucifixion the chief priests and Pharisees who had clamored for Jesus' death went before Pilate, calling his attention to Jesus' words that if they should destroy his temple, his body, after three days he would rise again. To forestall such an event, Pilate was requested to place a guard at the tomb. They foresaw the possibility that the followers of the Master might take away the body, saying that he had risen. This would indeed be a serious outcome of their efforts to destroy the impostor. Pilate told them to prepare their own watch, making it as secure as they wished. So they went and sealed the tomb, setting a guard to insure that it be not tampered with.

Some of the watch went into the city to report what had happened: the body had disappeared. The elders, fearful of the results of the strange occurrences, gave the watch money, a considerable sum, bribing them to report

² Matthew 28:3.

³ Matthew 28:6.

⁴ Matthew 28:9.

that the disciples of Jesus had taken away the body. To make doubly sure of their secrecy, they warned the guard that if the word of the disappearance reached the ears of the Governor, he would cause their arrest. The watchmen did as they were told, and so well was the story circulated, says Matthew, that it is "commonly reported until this day" ⁵ (probably 60 A.D.).

The malignity which had put Jesus upon the Cross was so deep-seated among the religious leaders of Palestine that they would leave no stone unturned that might give to his teachings the slightest semblance of truth. Their hatred was to a great degree inspired by their fears of the effect upon the hierarchy that would follow upon any proof that the Nazarene was really the Messiah; and his resurrection from the tomb would go far to proving the authority of his words. So deep had they fallen into iniquity that to bribe their own watchmen was a simple affair that would cause no revulsion of conscience.

Matthew then states that the disciples (eleven) proceeded to Galilee, into a mountain, as Jesus had directed. Mark states that Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene, who told the disciples what had happened, but they did not believe her story. Luke reports that Mary, with the other women who had accompanied her, told the disciples. Be that as it may, while apparently the story that Jesus had risen was not believed, impetuous Peter would find out for himself. Luke's account implies that Peter went alone to the tomb, while John states that he, the beloved disciple, went with Peter, and, being a faster runner, arrived first. Peter entered the tomb and saw the linen cloth in which the body had been wrapped and the napkin that had been about the head lying by itself.

⁵ Matthew 28:15.

Great was their astonishment, for not yet had they grasped the significance of the Scripture and of the Master's own words, which foretold that he would rise again after the third day.

The resurrection of the body of Jesus has been and is one of the most difficult problems which theology has had to explain. If Jesus died on the Cross, by what power, by what authority was he resurrected and taken from the tomb? The difficulties are removed through the understanding that at all times he was consciously in entire control of his physical body. Jesus knew that the so-called body was but the objectification of material sense; and that sense was subject to control through the understanding of his true selfhood as the Son of God. His spiritual selfhood, his true identity, had not been crucified, had never passed the portals of death, for, as God's likeness, the manifestation of Life which is permanent and eternal, he could never be destroyed, could never die. He permitted his tormentors to wreak their vengeance upon his poor body, to do their worst to destroy him, but neither they nor any other evil power could ever touch or injure in the least degree that true selfhood, which was God's perfect likeness.

Furthermore, his spiritual selfhood, being an expression of infinite Mind, of divine consciousness, could never become unconscious. Therefore, the true Jesus, his spiritual selfhood, was never crucified. It was this consciousness, indestructible and ever active, which revived the mutilated body and brought it forth from the tomb. The Christ, Truth, was active in overcoming the common belief that Jesus had been crucified and buried after the manner of the times. But the Christ idea, the spiritual selfhood which had been so conscious of his oneness with the Father, survived and enabled him to leave that phase of mortal belief, termed a sepulcher, to

reappear to his disciples, proving to them that Life is indestructible.

This was just another proof of what Jesus had so impressively proved on divers occasions during his ministry. He had so controlled the physical body that he had walked the waves; he had crossed the lake immediately; he had demonstrated the authority of Life over death in several instances, even as in the case of Lazarus, after the body had been entombed for four days. The wonder is that in view of these marvelous works, buttressed by the words of Jesus, the disciples had not believed, even anticipated, the resurrection. This crowning event in the Master's career was necessary to bring to the disciples, and to all who in the centuries to come should name the name of Christ, the true import of his life, his words, and works.

The Gospel record is somewhat confused as to the course of events that followed. It seems clear that to Mary Magdalene at the sepulcher did Jesus first manifest himself. She had left her companions to return to the tomb, apparently drawn by some inherent longing to be nearer the scene of this unparalleled event. As Mary wept, the two angels inquired as to the cause of her grief. Mary replied, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."⁶ As she turned about, Jesus stood by her, but she failed to recognize him. Thinking it to be the gardener, she begged him to tell her what had been done with the body. Jesus' one word, "Mary!" aroused her. The tenderness, the gentle rebuke, the pleading in his voice aroused her to behold in him the risen Saviour.

Awakened, convinced, Mary cried, "Rabboni!" that is, "Master," and made to grasp him. Jesus' words are

⁶ John 20:13.

of deepest import. "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."⁷ Here in plainest of language did Jesus foretell his final ascension, that is, his final release of his physical body, after he had convinced his followers and friends that he had taken from the tomb the same body that had been placed there. Not spiritualized matter, but a body of flesh and blood, as he afterwards declared and proved to his disciples.

The best interpretation of the gospel record indicates that although his first appearance was to Mary Magdalene, yet the second was to the group of women who went to tell the disciples that their Lord had risen, although they had not actually seen him at the tomb. Likewise, Peter and John found an empty tomb, but did not see the Lord.

The third appearance is lightly recorded in Luke 24:34, and is also referred to by Paul in I Corinthians 15:5. There is no record of what passed between Jesus and Peter, but it evidently took place prior to Jesus' appearance to two men on the walk to Emmaus. This village, held in sacred memory because of its association with the risen Saviour, is not now definitely located. But the story, because of its holy aspect, remains. Two men, walking on the road to Emmaus, are talking of the marvelous happenings during recent days. They had heard that the entombed Jesus had been resurrected. As they talked, Jesus himself joined them, but was not recognized. The newcomer, overhearing their conversation, asked what it was about, and why they were so sad about it. One of the men, Cleopas, replied that he must

⁷ John 20:16, 17.

be a stranger if he had not heard the startling news that was common talk.

But the stranger would not be put off. He would know precisely what news had so disturbed the city. Then he was told the story of the trial, crucifixion, and resurrection. Jesus, to test them, told them how foolish they were to believe such reports, even though it had been foretold by the prophets. Should not the Christ have endured these things in order to enter into his glory? Then he explained the Scriptures, from Moses on, which foretold these events. When he sat at supper with them, he broke bread, and they suddenly recognized him. Upon that, he vanished. Convinced of the identity of their companion, they hastened back to the city to tell what they had experienced.

Scholars have been unable to identify the two men. Whether Cleopas is the Cleopas of John 19:25, and Alphaeus the one in Matthew 10:3 is a matter of conjecture. However, the value of the record is unmistakable as witness to the fourth appearance of Jesus after he had left the tomb.

The next appearance of which there is a record, and apparently the fifth, was after this wise: In the evening of Easter Sunday the disciples, except Thomas, were gathered in a room with closed doors, still fearful of the Jews, no doubt deep in conversation pertaining to the recent events, the significance of which they had not grasped. Instantly Jesus was in their midst. The closed doors did not stop his ingress. His "Peace be unto you"⁸ did not quiet them. To them he appeared to be a ghost. Seeing their fright, he at once undertook to calm their troubled thoughts by convincing them that he was not a spirit but flesh and bones. He showed them

⁸ John 20:19.

his side and hands, still bearing the marks of the crucifixion. His purpose was to prove to them that his physical body stood before them.

Then, to carry the evidence still further, he indicated his hunger and asked for food, eating fish and honeycomb, which they placed before him. He was proving that his body was still performing its normal functions. He was hungry, and the digestive organs were functioning. No wonder that their hearts were filled with joy! Here was their beloved Teacher and Master restored to them, companioning with them after his terrible experience.

When, later, Thomas came and was told of the Lord's visit, he declared his inability to believe that it really was Jesus. He would not be convinced unless he put his hands into the wounds which he had seen inflicted upon the poor body of the Master. Doubting Thomas! It is little wonder that down the centuries has come this example of an unbeliever—that doubting Thomases are still unconvinced except upon the most positive of proof. But Thomas was to see and feel and believe.

One week later (as it appears, on Sunday, April 23 or 24) the disciples were assembled, and Thomas with them. As before, Jesus came through the shut doors and stood among them. Again he saluted with "Peace be unto you."⁹ Aware of Thomas' incredulity, he turned to him, inviting him to the closest inspection of the wounded hands and side, not to be doubtful but to believe that this was the same body which had been so grossly maltreated and buried in a tomb. Now Thomas was convinced. No longer a doubting disciple, he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God."¹⁰ Thereupon Jesus addressed

⁹ John 20:26.

¹⁰ John 20:28.

him with the beautiful words, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."¹¹ Thus did the risen Saviour teach the lesson of faith, of faith superior to testimony of the material senses.

The next appearance of Jesus to his disciples is at the sea of Galilee. Apparently in obedience to the directions of the risen Jesus to meet him in Galilee, the disciples proceed thence. Still under the shadow of the crucifixion, they return to their original calling, humble fishermen in the waters of Galilee. All night they labor, with no success. At daylight Jesus appears on the shore and hails them across the waters, asking if they have caught anything. When the reply is negative, he instructs them to cast their net on the right side. They obey and the net is filled. John, keener of perception than the others, recognizes the risen Saviour and tells Peter it is the Lord. Peter, impetuous as ever, jumps overboard and swims ashore. When the others arrive, they find Jesus has already prepared breakfast for them over a charcoal fire. Fish and bread are ready for them; but, as his friends arrive with their great fare of fish, Jesus asks for some of them, as he desires that the disciples, too, shall have a part in the preparation of the meal.

At the close of this holy meal, Jesus suddenly asks Peter this incisive question: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs." Again the question is raised, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me?" Simon replies, "Why, Lord, you know that I love you." Then Jesus admonishes him, "Then be a shepherd to my sheep." Then, even a third time, Jesus queries, "Simon Peter, do

¹¹ John 20:29.

you love me?" Peter, grieved, replies, "Lord, as you know all things, you know that I love you." Jesus again admonishes, "Feed my sheep."¹²

Some commentators see in Jesus' thrice-repeated query reference to Peter's thrice denial on the night of the Master's arrest. The query, "Lovest thou me more than these," has been variously interpreted. Did "these" mean the other disciples, or did it mean the fishes—that is, the material result of Peter's occupation as a fisherman? The question is answered if we realize that Jesus was asking Peter if he loved the Christ that Jesus had manifested more than he did his human companions—a very pertinent question.

Significance is also attached to the use of the two different Greek verbs signifying "love." In the first two queries the word used denotes reverence, a something more than mere human affection. In the third query the verb means the love of friends, a less reverential, more human sense of affection. The word used for sheep varies also. In the first query the word signifies sheep in the ordinary sense. Later, the word signifies lambs, or little lambs. It appears that this change of words was due to Jesus' sense that Peter did not get the true significance of his question. Be that as it may, it furnishes a most interesting study in the use of words.

In the conversation that followed, it is felt that Jesus hinted at the martyrdom of Peter. And to Peter's query as to what about John, Jesus replied, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me."¹³ And some felt that Jesus' words implied that John was not to die, but would be translated. It is very plain that there is at least an implied rebuke to Peter in, "What is that to thee? follow thou me."

¹² John 21:15 ff. (Moffatt's Translation).

¹³ John 21:22.

In the fifteenth chapter of Corinthians, Paul, in discoursing upon the resurrection and ascension, states that Jesus was seen by about five hundred of the brethren at one time and that many of those were alive at the time of his statement, although some had passed on. There is nothing in the Four Gospels to corroborate this. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that Paul had companioned with the followers of Jesus and was most likely to have heard the story of this meeting with the Master from the lips of those who were present when he appeared.

Matthew relates that the eleven went to a mountain in Galilee, where Jesus declared, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."¹⁴ Cognizant of the divine omnipotence ever present as the Christ, the full expression of the Godhead, he possessed this power by reflection, through this very understanding of its presence; that is, because he knew his relation to the Father. It was the prerogative of the Christ to make manifest, utilize, the omnipotence of God, as he possessed in the same manner every other divine quality in its fullness and perfection.

It was also on this occasion that Jesus gave instructions to spread his message abroad, to give it the widest publicity, to teach all nations and to baptize them "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."¹⁵ In these words Jesus broke the dogma that salvation was for but a single race, a chosen people. All humanity, ready to receive the grace of God through this ministry, was to be blessed in the name of the Father of all men; in the name of the Son, the spiritual idea of God; and of the Holy Ghost, the divine Comforter, the Christ,

¹⁴ Matthew 28:18.

¹⁵ Matthew 28:19.

Truth, forever knocking at the door of human consciousness, ready to enter whenever the door should be opened.

The disciples' mission was to be of the broadest scope, reaching every nation and including the dissemination of all they had received from Jesus during his entire ministry. All that he had taught, they were to broadcast to the world. Surely, no other band of devout followers of the Master ever received so comprehensive a mandate. He closed his instructions with the most sacred promise that the Christ, throughout their ministry, would never leave them; yes, would be present even to the end of the world.

It was of this meeting that Matthew states that some "doubted." Some scholars translate the Greek word *edistasan* as "hesitated," implying that the disciples were still uncertain of the full significance of the great drama of which they were witnesses.

Of the next appearance of Jesus, apparently the ninth, but one mention is made in the Scriptures, and that by Paul in I Corinthians 15:7: "After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles." This James was, as generally accepted, the brother of the Lord. No hint is given as to the time or place, or what occurred at this meeting.

The last appearance of Jesus was on the occasion of the ascension, when he disappeared from mortal vision. To be sure, Paul saw him when on the road to Damascus, but this was in a vision and therefore does not belong in the accounts of the Master's appearance *in persona* following the resurrection.

Two only of the Four Gospels contain accounts of the ascension, and in these there is marked diversity in language, and they also vary widely in length. Luke's record of the event is brief: "And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed

them.”¹⁶ Thereupon he was parted from the group and disappeared, and, as the writer states, he was “carried up into heaven.”¹⁷ In the exaltation that followed, the disciples returned to the city and went to the temple “praising God.”¹⁸

Some commentators connect the previous verses of Luke 24:36 to 49 with the incident of the ascension. These state that Jesus had appeared to his disciples and had spoken the words as recorded, and then led them out to Bethany. It was at this time that the Master explained to them that what had occurred was in accordance with prophecy; that it had, in fact, been foreordained that he should be crucified and rise on the third day; that it should be the duty of his disciples to preach in his name among all nations, beginning in the Holy City itself, repentance and remission of sins. They had witnessed his works and should make them known. He instructed them to remain in Jerusalem until they should be spiritually prepared for this great work, the founding of Christianity.

John makes no direct reference to the ascension. Why he omitted this transcendent event is a matter of conjecture. As his Gospel was written long after the others, he may have regarded the incident so well described by his predecessors as to require no further explication from him. In view of the great importance that Christendom has attached to it through the centuries, this reasoning does not seem wholly satisfactory.

Matthew, likewise, gives no account of the ascension, but ends his gospel with the story of the meeting of the Master with the disciples on a mountain in Galilee, when he declared all power to have been given him from

¹⁶ Luke 24:50.

¹⁷ Luke 24:51.

¹⁸ Luke 24:53.

heaven. It was at this time that he uttered the memorable promise that he would be ever present with them, even unto the end of the world. His words could scarcely be construed as indicating that Jesus, the human, would be ever present. Rather did he allude to the Christ, to his divine selfhood, the spirit of Truth, which has never been absent, but throughout eternity is everywhere present as the manifestation of God. Any other interpretation elicits a mysticism which is impossible of explanation. Not the man Jesus, but his spiritual nature, the Christ, is the Saviour and Way-Shower to mankind. The Nazarene was the great Exemplar, the Messiah, foretold of the prophets as the liberator of humanity from its self-imposed bondage. That all foretold by the prophets was to be fulfilled, he declared to the disciples, all that was "written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me."¹⁹ And he proceeded to explain the meaning of the Scriptures to these faithful ones.

The ascension has been a serious stumbling block to the rationalists who are unwilling to accept what may not be, as they say, "rationally" explained. To those of spiritual vision, who recognize the real man as spiritual, who see God's Law as ever operative, it is a wholly logical occurrence. To be sure, it transcends material sense, but in no greater degree than does the virgin birth. "The law of the Spirit of life"²⁰ to which Paul makes so definite reference, transcends material law in its every phase. Hence there are no material phenomena that may not be superseded by the Law of Life, the spiritual Law that governs the realm of reality.

That Jesus brought his body from the tomb, the iden-

¹⁹ Luke 24:44.

²⁰ Romans 8:2.

tical body his friends had placed there, the Scriptures plainly affirm. That Jesus had completely gained the mastery of materiality in its various forms he had demonstrated on divers occasions. He took his body about whenever and wherever he wished. There was no material barrier to stop him. Now his work on earth was finished. He had no further use for a material sense of body. His knowledge of his true body, his spiritual selfhood, was so completely gained, that all sense of his body as material was relinquished, and that false sense of body disappeared. With the relinquishment of the material sense of body, there was no longer the objectified sense of material body. It ceased even to seem to be. In other words, Jesus ascended above reach of the physical senses and was no more sensibly with his devoted friends.

The ascension is not a difficult problem in the light of Christian metaphysics. In fact, it was the inevitable result of Jesus' progressive sense of reality. After having so completely transformed his consciousness, it was impossible for him to retain the belief of a material body as man. This is precisely the logical outcome of the state so earnestly enjoined by Paul. "Be not conformed to this world,"²¹ that is, to belief in material things as reality, "but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." This transformation of the mind takes place through gaining spiritual truth, the Christ, Truth, the truth about God and His universe, including man. Jesus had so completely transformed his mind, his consciousness, that he was able to ascend above the realm of matter.

²¹ Romans 12:2.

XXVIII

What Jesus Was and Did

THE most just judgment that may be passed upon any man derives from answers to the queries, What influence did he have upon his own times and what upon succeeding generations? What influence then did the Man of Nazareth have upon his contemporaries, and what has been the result of his life and works upon the later generations? The answers to these queries reveal in major degree the effect which the teachings and works of Jesus had upon the contemporary world and what has been the impact of the Christian religion upon mankind in the nineteen centuries since the human Jesus disappeared from mortal sight.

It must be recognized that while Jesus supplied the foundation stones upon which has been raised the structure of the Christian religion, yet Jesus did not establish Christianity as such. Christianity resulted from the interpretation which his immediate followers and their successors put upon his teachings; it represented the understanding of the Apostles and the other early converts to the Christ-message. Among them the most prominent by far was the Apostle Paul. In undertaking therefore to determine the results of the Master's teachings, we must give due consideration to these facts.

Harnack in his excellent volume entitled *What Is Christianity?* quotes John Stuart Mill as having said that mankind cannot be too often reminded that there was once a man named Socrates. Still more important is it to remind mankind again and again that a man of

the name of Jesus Christ once stood in their midst. Students of philosophy pay a great tribute to the Greek philosopher, for he did much to liberate the thought of humanity.

Christ Jesus went much further in his teaching regarding existence and its significance. He taught what life is and how to gain that assurance of the continuity of the individual expression of the infinite Life for which mankind so poignantly yearns. Moreover, he supplemented his teaching by the demonstration that life is eternal, indestructible, permanent, and perfect; that death is an illusion, for the real man lives forever. Surely no greater blessing could be bestowed upon mortals than this; and equally surely none other has been so persistently and continuously sought.

The shadow of the grave has clouded the mortal horizon from the beginning of the race. This cloud is dispelled by the Nazarene, who proved that while the mortal, physical body might be crucified, yet the real man is deathless, eternal. Humanity's hatred in its most violent form could never destroy that which God had created in His own image and likeness.

The importance to humanity of this boon alone is beyond computation, immeasurable from any earthly standard of values. It surpasses the wealth of a Midas, the philosophy of a Socrates, the learning of a da Vinci, the skill of a Michelangelo, as far as the heavens are above the earth. No adequate value could be placed upon it, yet this is but one phase of the priceless truth which Jesus so triumphantly revealed to humanity. Upon those who gained the true meaning of the demonstration that Life is eternal, timeless, it had the effect of convincing them beyond possibility of doubt of the spiritual nature of the Master's revelation. He was the Messiah, and his message was from on high.

The resurrection and later appearance of Jesus on divers occasions was the climax to an unfolding faith. Now there could be no doubt. The demonstration was complete. The effect of these facts when eloquently put forth by Peter, as related in Acts, had the effect of bringing three thousand into the Christian fold on a single occasion.

Through the intervening centuries since that holy experience on Olivet, myriads have found the Way of Life in the teachings and example of the Master. The Way is complete; nothing is lacking in Jesus' message of Life and Love. Nothing needs to be added when once these are spiritually understood. What humanity needs is to accept and apply his words, to gain the sacred impact of his works, and accept them as the guide to the Kingdom, to health, harmony, and joyous experience, which will be continuous precisely in proportion to the fidelity, consecration, and humility of his followers.

To compare the condition of society before the appearance of this master-man with what has been demonstrated of Christian virtues in the later centuries is to gain some glimpse, however inadequate and limited, of what the impact of his life upon society has brought in the way of reformation. Notwithstanding the appalling condition into which the world just now is plunged, yet the Christ-like desire to help those in distress, to succor the needy and suffering, represents a moral and spiritual desire, a type of humaneness little known prior to the advent of the Master. The instances are innumerable where the love for humanity has found expression in just such Christianly acts.

The assault upon the world which is at present striking directly at the very roots of Christian faith and doctrine is but a temporary phase, the effort of the carnal mind to establish its will as the rule and law of society.

As evil can never really prosper, as God alone has power and reality, it inevitably follows as the day the night that Truth will triumph, that the revelation of Christ Jesus of God's omnipotence and omnipresence will become manifest in a chastened and purified world. Jesus foreknew and foretold what would happen; and he spoke with authority when he declared that out of it all would come the Kingdom wherein man, the real man, the Son of God, forever abides. The world chaos is not due to absence of the divine Presence; rather is it due to the failure to recognize and apply the fact of God's ever-presence and availability to meet humanity's need.

Apart from the direct testimony regarding the resurrection is the evidence, less direct but no less impressive, of the effect the resurrection of Jesus had upon his disciples. From the depths of darkness and discouragement they were suddenly lifted to heights of glorious conviction so unshakable that they were prepared thereafter to undergo any type of hardship in order to share their conviction with humanity, wherever prepared to receive the good news. There is no denying this evidence of the permanent seal of both faith and understanding which the events following the crucifixion put upon the sacred words of the Master. "I am the resurrection, and the life"¹ now became words of living light. Before they had believed; now they knew and understood. A marvelous transformation of spirit among the disciples followed these unparalleled events.

Historical documents may be necessary to prove the tremendous influence of the Christ-message upon civilization during the intervening centuries. During the period of meditation which followed those extraordinary happenings, might not the disciples have seen complete

¹ John 11:25.

fulfillment of the Hebrew Scriptures? Now they were convinced that the Messiah had come, had been in their very midst. While it may be idle to speculate upon the mental changes which the disciples underwent, yet in the light of their subsequent activities, the result of their mental transformation is unmistakable.

Paul, the earliest of the New Testament authors, declared that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures,"² and that he was buried and that he rose on the third day, thus fulfilling the ancient prophecies. Peter found in the Psalms prediction of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. Gospel writers, Luke and John, likewise found in the resurrection fulfillment of the Scriptures.³

None can gainsay that the importance of the resurrection stories is beyond calculation in putting the seal of absolute certainty upon the Messianic experience of Jesus. The teachings of the Master, so comprehensive, logical, and practical, even when buttressed by his many demonstrations, needed just this climax in order to establish Christianity upon a firm and practical basis. While the influence of his presence no less than his words carried the conviction with those close to him that he was all he claimed to be, that his authority was from on High, that he was sent of God to heal and redeem humanity, yet the final proof was necessary.

Not by the blood shed on the Cross, not through the vicarious suffering of the Master was salvation to be won; rather by the transformation of human consciousness from a material to a spiritual basis was freedom from mortal beliefs to be gained. By this means alone would mortals advance from their material restrictions into that

² I Corinthians 15:3.

³ Luke 24:46, John 20:9.

state of consciousness which constitutes the Kingdom; the very presence of the Holy One of Israel, and the Cross, and all that followed showed the way to this heavenly state.

As the Apostles and immediate followers mentally progressed from the gloom of the crucifixion to the glory of the resurrection, they became determined to undertake the spreading of the good news wherever it would be cordially received. From these early adherents to the message of the Messiah stemmed the extraordinary movement that has carried the gospel to every part of the civilized globe. How unprecedented, then, has been the influence of this man who, born in a stable, cradled in a manger, reared in obscurity, because of his fidelity to his spiritual mission, has become the Redeemer of mankind! God is and forever remains the God of the living, not of the dead.

No account of the effects that the resurrection had upon the early followers of Jesus would be complete that did not give due importance to the spiritual transformation which came to Saul of Tarsus (Paul), his conversion from a mental state which made him a zealous persecutor of the early Christians, to a conviction which transformed him into the most ardent and by far the most potent of those early missionaries who carried the gospel story far afield, even to the Eternal City and the farthest confines of the known world. Directly from the lips of Peter and James, Paul heard the story of the events immediately following the resurrection; and that the crucified Jesus had risen became the chief theme of his preaching. His conclusion was formulated through his own independent judgment. It was conviction arrived at both from the evidence presented and from his own experience. Paul's concept of God was so transformed and he became so certain of God's immanence that he

passed the remainder of his life in spreading the gospel as he understood it. Surely there could be no more convincing example of the transforming influence of the life and teachings of the Master, than the transformation of Saul into Paul.

Christ Jesus has been properly termed the "Great Teacher." This characterization arose from two causes: First of all, he had to impart the most precious of all messages. Of this he was firmly convinced. It is commonplace belief that to carry conviction to one's hearers one must be convinced of the truth and importance of one's message. The poet knew this when he wrote,

"Thou must be true thyself, if thou the truth
would'st teach;
Thy heart must overflow, if thou another's heart
would'st reach."

—Horatius Bonar.

No heart ever overflowed with a deeper conviction of the truth he taught and of its priceless value to mankind. This overflowing could scarcely fail to strike a responsive chord in every heart attuned to its reception. Those receiving it were incomparably blessed; those with closed minds lost the opportunity to enter the very gates of Paradise. Furthermore, Jesus was most skillful in the impartation of his message. He knew how to teach. No teacher ever displayed greater ability in what in our day is commonly termed "pedagogy" than this man of Galilee. No one ever drove home sublime truth with more telling effect. He was indeed a master of the art of teaching.

Not only did Jesus know how and when to give knowledge, but he well knew when not to impart. At times he even refused to talk to his dear friends, knowing that they were not prepared to receive and assimilate the

deeper things of God, of which he was so constantly conscious. From the material-minded multitude he withheld much that he privately gave to his chosen ones. To cast pearls before swine advantaged neither the carnal-minded nor himself. In fact, he knew that the truth, prematurely imparted, would so enrage the carnal mind that it would turn and rend the teacher himself. No earnest student of the Gospels can fail to appreciate the unfailing wisdom of this man, this Son of God—wisdom born not of the flesh, not of human experience, but received from the Source of all wisdom, the one infinite Mind.

The oft repeated use of the term, "Son of man," as Jesus' frequent characterization of himself, raises the query as to the precise meaning which he attached to it. In the sayings of Jesus as reported in the Four Gospels, the term appears more than fourscore times. It was used less frequently by later writers of the Christian literature, a fact which is explained, perhaps, by the lack of understanding of the significance which the Master attached to it. Son of man! What does it signify, and why so frequently used by Jesus?

A variety of explanations present themselves. As a human, born of and into the flesh, Jesus was literally a son of man, that is, of one of the human race, of the genus homo. He was, materially, a man born of woman, even though of virgin motherhood. He grew up as a member of a normal family, educated and trained in a useful occupation, as were the youth of his time. Accordingly, there are these seeming logical reasons for the frequent designation, "Son of man," the designation which he gave himself. Furthermore, so that he could be of the greatest service to humanity, it was manifestly the desire of the Nazarene to establish a common touch with the people. As his purpose was to heal and save,

this could best be accomplished through establishing intimate relation with the masses. Aloofness would not forward his purpose. If the people regarded him as one of themselves, even though as an exalted human, it might substantially assist him in his effort to be accepted as Saviour and Way-Shower.

Another view put forth by many scholarly commentators attributes to the term something of a mystical significance, especially referring it to the book of Ezekiel and to the apocryphal writings of Enoch and Esdras. Professor Kent holds this view. He points out that the meaning of the term "Son of man" held by first-century Jews closely related it to Daniel 7:13, where Daniel declared that he beheld in a vision "one like the Son of man" coming in a cloud in the heaven. While it seems that originally the passage related to the saints who had won or would win the divine Kingdom, yet in later times it took on a Messianic significance.

Writing about 80 B.C., Enoch quotes in the *Similitudes* the answer given by the angel to the question, Who is the Son of man? "This is the Son of man who has righteousness with whom dwells righteousness and who reveals all the treasures of that which is hidden, because the Lord of Spirit has chosen him, and his lot before the Lord of Spirit has surpassed everything in uprightness forever."⁴ The statement continues in the prophecy that this Son of man will arouse the mighty ones of earth and punish the sinners. It was logical that the later Jews should identify this Son of man with the expected Messiah, who was to bring deliverance from all constricting conditions into which humanity had so ignominiously fallen, restore the ancient glory, and ensure a golden era of peace and prosperity.

⁴ Charles B. Kent, *Life and Teachings of Jesus*, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913, p. 317.

Another theory presented is that Jesus used the term for its very ambiguity. That is, so unlike the generally anticipated conception of the coming Messiah was his own experience to be, that he used the term, "Son of man," to prepare his hearers for the events which were to follow. The Messiah for whom the Jews had so long looked could hardly undergo persecution and crucifixion, as he knew his fate would be. Hence he was using a term which would aid in preparing the public for subsequent events. However interesting these discussions may be, yet the fact remains that they do not directly affect the great role which Jesus so successfully carried through to an unprecedented and unparalleled triumph.

The most popular characterization of Christ Jesus is that of Saviour. The query inevitably arises, Saviour from what? Saviour implies salvation, that is, a process of being saved, and the usual connotation is that there is something in human experience from which salvation is both needed and desired. Even a casual glance at present-day humanity reveals much from which mortals desire to be saved, made free. If this be true today, it was in greater degree true during the first century of the Christian era. The hands upon the clock of civilization have gone far forward in these nineteen centuries, owing to the acceptance and demonstration of the teachings of the man who came to save the world from its burdens of sickness and sin, of poverty, misery, and despair.

Jesus came not to destroy but to fulfill and save, and salvation, as he so plainly taught, was freedom from the restrictions imposed by the mortal or carnal mind. He saw poor humanity weighed down with its load of materiality, accompanied by all the self-imposed misery of a carnal, wicked, and constricting state of consciousness. He came to save humanity from the toils of false belief because he knew that the mortal state was not the natural,

that is the divine, state of man, whom God made in His likeness. Jesus saw, as no one else had ever seen, the dire tragedy of human experience. Knowing the truth about man, God's likeness, unfallen because God's likeness could never become His unlikeness, unfallen because the Son of God, His own blessed offspring, had never passed from perfection to imperfection, from light to darkness, from good to evil, Jesus saw as his mission to set before the world the true understanding of God, of His universe, and man. Knowing the truth as he knew it, how impossible was it for him to do less than to exercise his utmost capability of demonstration, to show the children of darkness the way, the holy way into ineffable light, the light irradiated from Him who is infinite and perfect Love.

In our own day we see many men and women who have caught a glimpse of this light, whose lives have been illumined and quickened by its holy rays, turn from the common paths of human experience to the holy privilege of taking to others something of the blessing which has so changed the course of their own desires. If these devoted ministers of the light borrowed from that great and shining star of the first century, who came to illumine the whole world, are so enlightened and inspired, how much greater must have been the Master's desire, commensurate with his understanding, to share the ineffable brilliancy of that light with all ready to receive its blessings!

This desire of the Master was born of his understanding, his knowledge of the truth that sets men free. His declared purpose was to give life and to give it more abundantly to all receptive to his healing touch. This abundant life which he promised followed in increasing degree as the inevitable result of laying aside the false beliefs engendered by the mortal, the carnal mind, and

laying hold of the truth, the facts of Life and its infinite expression.

He saw mortals encumbered by a burden of falsity, inherited and self-imposed, which, in utter ignorance of their true selfhood as the children of God, they had accepted as inevitable and unavoidable. To show the perfect way of escape from this frightful bondage, frightful because cherishing in its bosom belief in evil as reality, in sin and disease as unavoidable, and in death as inescapable, was the purpose and role of this Saviour to mankind.

How impossible adequately to evaluate this service—impossible to measure its meaning to mortals who may awaken from this dream, this phantasm of horror, to learn that it is after all only a dream, a mental experience in which inheres nothing of reality, nothing of the blessedness and perfection which forever belong to the child of God, created in His image.

Jesus pointed the perfect way of complete salvation from all that restricts, encumbers, and hinders mankind. He was and is the Way-Shower out of dense darkness into light, the light of eternal bliss. That humanity has not more generally and more completely accepted his directions in no measure lessens their importance or impairs their truthfulness and potency. Like all blessings, they must be accepted, laid hold of, believed, and practiced, if their benefits are to be realized in human experience.

It is indubitably true that the numbers are growing of those who are turning back to the sources of the Christian doctrine, to ponder and gain for themselves the essence of the message of this man of Nazareth who gave the world the perfect plan of salvation, who was called upon to abandon all that mortals hold dear in terms of materiality, to become the Saviour, the Way-Shower out

of the morass of woe into the Kingdom of everlasting joy. And it was not alone a future state into which he showed the way. It was a present, an immediate experience for all who would leave the old, the dark, the hard way, for the way of light and life. Not "otherworldness"—that implies a future experience to be entered upon through the gateway of death—but a type of "otherworldness" attainable here and now, a state of joy and peace, of prosperity and well-being open to all. There is a present possibility of entrance upon the blissful experience which never ends! It is this type of salvation which Jesus offered to all who would believe, accept the Christ-way, and persevere in walking in it.

Words without works are hollow, even tinkling cymbals. Jesus could never be charged with hypocrisy, with preaching what he did not practice. His works invariably proved and implemented his words. No other has made so great sacrifice to prove his words as did the Master. He even went to the Cross, following a period of persecution and mockery which the malice of the Jewish hierarchy thrust upon him.

He who had declared, "he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it,"⁵ proved that his words were true, beyond possibility of refutation. He who is willing to relinquish the false, the material sense of life for Jesus' sake, that is, for the priceless privilege of gaining the Christ, the truth about Life, about God, finds the Life which is eternal, the self-existent Life, apart from all material conditions, eternal and everlasting. This was and is the reward for "believing on me," for accepting the Christ and seeing God as the Way of Life.

Surely Jesus' declaration regarding service, true service and its reward, could have no more impressive example

⁵ Matthew 10:39.

than his own life. He led in the way he asked others to follow, even up to the point of crucifixion. His reward came in a state of consciousness so exalted, so freed from materiality, from all belief that life is resident in matter, that he entered upon a state of bliss beyond the apprehension of mortals. Only as the material is abandoned, only as thought is spiritualized, do mortals approximate the state of consciousness which he attained. When he had gained it, he disappeared from mortal view, to sit down "at the right hand of God,"⁶ that is, to awaken in the perfection of God's likeness. Jesus as Way-Shower placed no impossible task before mortals. He marked out, for others to follow, the way of salvation and security, of permanent peace.

The greatest of all human tragedies is the unwillingness of mortals to accept the way of this lowly, this mighty man, this Son of God. The chaos and strife of the present is due to this unwillingness of the majority of mankind to follow in his footsteps. Christians are convinced that the tragedies of the world will continue, will follow one after another, with all the suffering entailed, until mortals awaken to the inescapable fact that Truth alone triumphs, is victorious. If error, evil, in its inherent wickedness could triumph over good, over righteousness, over God and His Christ, then the condition of mortals would indeed be hopeless; then would chaos and old night prevail in a world of darkness; then would Michael and his angels be overthrown and Satan would be the victor.

But that such a condition is impossible while God is God and mankind is in some measure responsive to His will, Christ Jesus taught and proved beyond the possibility of refutation. Truth is forever victorious. That

⁶ Romans 8:34.

its expression in human affairs often seems delayed is no indication of its impotency. Rather does it indicate the resistance of mortal mind to its reception. The carnal mind is so busy with its own affairs, proving its ownership of its oxen, gaining title to its land, paying attention to the newly-wed wife, that it quite closes the door to the transforming Christ. These false beliefs of mortals hold humanity in bondage until there comes an awakening to their unreal nature. Then Truth supplants error, and the portals of heaven swing wide.

Jesus recognized the great importance of the individual. He looked completely through the exterior, the material sense of man, and saw God's image and likeness. Seeing this, he could hardly fail to recognize its true worth, its all-importance, for God's handiwork must be important. It is like its Creator. Jesus knew that man, to be God's image, must express the divine qualities. The qualities which emanate from God are universal; they belong to every child of God. These qualities Jesus expressed more completely than any other man. They dominated and directed his whole existence when once he recognized his mission. Whenever these universal characteristics which emanate from God find expression in a human in large measure, there is recognized true greatness. Abraham Lincoln is increasingly admired as the qualities he manifested are referred back to their divine Source. These qualities are great and permanent. They belong to universal man.

For this reason, Jesus sought and healed the lowly and unimportant in the social order. He well knew that the poor, outward, material mortal had no semblance whatsoever to the likeness of God, to man's true selfhood. He healed the poor woman of the street, as well as the blind beggar, the tax gatherer, and the servant of the centurion. He knew that God is no respecter of

material personality, the husk which was hiding the true man. It was of his humble followers that he declared, "Ye are the salt of the earth . . . Ye are the light of the world."⁷ He saw man as God sees him, pure and perfect.

Jesus knew that the counterfeit, the false material sense of man was like the grass, today in the field, tomorrow to be gathered and cast into the furnace. Only that could endure which was from God, which partook of the divine nature. Surely the wretched humanity which so crowded about him for his healing touch had no likeness to the infinite and eternal Father of all. In the divine economy, every man possesses his own individuality, his permanent and unalterable identity, forever governed by God. That is the true democracy in which every child of God has his true place in a grand brotherhood, so extensive as to include all God's children. In this divine State the individual is the norm of perfection.

Much discussion has arisen as to Jesus' relation to the church, which, founded upon his precepts, has become the world's greatest instrument for the evangelization of society. Did he foresee and prepare for such an institution? Were his familiar words spoken to Peter the assurance that it was his purpose to form an *ekklesia* to carry on the work of disseminating his doctrine for the benefit of all nations and peoples? He used this word, translated "church," but once, and then, it seems, with a somewhat mystical connotation. Was it not, rather, a reference to the spiritual idea, the spiritual concept of which the human institution is but a symbol?

Some justification is given to this concept of church in the light of Paul's words: "And he (the Christ) is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the

⁷ Matthew 5:13, 14.

firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.”⁸ Some scholars today, insisting upon the spiritual concept of church, declare that this spiritual idea is God’s greatest gift to the world. It seems that there is a definite relationship between the Christ and the true concept of church as a spiritual entity, symbolized by the institution, which, founded by the disciples in a most humble manner, properly cherished, should grow into a mighty tree with branches overspreading the entire earth.

It is wholly logical that Jesus, with his conviction that he was the Messiah, that his works had divine authority, that he was the Saviour to mankind, should have made some provision for the perpetuation and dissemination of his teachings. His desire was that the work he had established should be available to bless the whole race. He had sent both the Twelve and the Seventy to carry afield the good news. He must have believed that, after him, the faithful would wish to share their blessings with their fellow men. It was inevitable that the same divine impulse which had brought to the relief of poor humanity a Saviour and Way-Shower should also in the fullness of time provide the instrument for perpetuating his words and works. While Jesus had declared himself sent to the lost sheep of Israel, yet at the close of his career he had instructed the faithful to carry his message everywhere. The words are unmistakable: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”⁹

⁸ Colossians 1:18.

⁹ Matthew 28:19, 20.

There can be no doubt as to his purpose to spread his message broadcast through the ministry of the faithful. Moreover, he declared that he would not go away but would be forever present. Manifestly the human Jesus was not to be ever present; but the spiritual idea, the Christ, which he had so triumphantly manifested, was to be forever present. This Holy Ghost, this divine Comforter, had in fact never departed, had never gone away, but, being the infinite expression of the infinite God, was, and is, everywhere present.

The church, then, the institution which was to become the instrument of this sacred work, was founded and grew, disseminating the Master's teachings as they were understood, interpreted, by the church fathers. It has followed, however, that what the Christian Church in general has given to the world is the concept of the Master's words and mission and works which each church body has developed for itself. As individuals vary greatly in their approach to any signal subject, so these church bodies have differed widely in their interpretation of the doctrine of him who is termed the founder of Christianity.

Here is a distinction that must not be ignored, for what has been presented may vary more than a little from the message of the Galilean Prophet as he journeyed about the Holy Land with his little band of faithful pupils.

Realization of this fact is turning earnest students to the source of the divine message, the sacred Scriptures, where each may read and study the original texts and imbibe the spirit of true Christianity. Many have awakened to the fact that much has been thrust upon the Christian Church that is man-made rather than divinely inspired. Creed and dogma, ritual and formalism have, for many, hidden the spiritual import of the message as it

fell from the lips of the first Christian. The result of returning to the Scriptures is manifested in a new type of liberalism, which, without turning its devotees away from God or His representative, is again making the holy words vibrant with life and meaning. This is the most hopeful sign of the times.

To those who caught some glimpse of the Christ, Jesus became godlike. If there be a God, they reasoned, and the Jewish mind had long been fixed in this direction, He must be revealed by this man who speaks, lives, and acts as man has never spoken or acted before. His students believed he was in close communion with God. Those who have undertaken to follow him through the Christian centuries have regarded him as the Revelator, the interpreter of God to men. God must be like what they have discovered in this most outstanding character. Moreover, what men have believed of this godlike man has stirred to expression the best in themselves. He has been their inspiration to a higher plane of living, in some measure trying to pattern their chosen Exemplar. They, too, would become godlike, as he was.

There can be no measure, no estimate of the extent of this inspiration, emanating from one who lived on earth nineteen hundred years ago. It is because this divine afflatus is the manifestation of the ever-present Christ that the inspiration never dwindles, never ceases to stir humanity to the desire for and accomplishment of deeds more nearly emulating the Master. This it is that has led men and women to encounter great hardships, to pass their lives in remote parts of earth, in the midst of environments having little of comfort or convenience. What for? Why? To share with their less fortunate brethren the glad news that God is ever-present Love; that man, the offspring of Love, His likeness, is spiritual and perfect and true; that a man who lived long ago told

all this and much more, and proved his words by his works; and that the same Christ which found such potent and practical expression through him is at hand now, to bestow upon all the same blessings, to liberate the captive "of" material sense, to heal the sick, to redeem the sinning, even to raise mortals from the belief in death as an inescapable experience. All this is but a part of the glad news which, received through the inspired life of this Saviour, is likewise inspiring others to carry forward his holy work. Surely this Saviour, this Christ, is reaching humanity, even when plunged into the depths of ignominy and despair.

Understanding that, while the human Jesus has passed from mortal view, the Christ is ever present, aids humanity greatly in reconciling revelation with reason, and in this reconciliation men are finding the very Way of Life which the Master made plain. Moreover, it solves a serious problem for the Jewish race. Jewish theology was founded upon the solid base of one God. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord" ¹⁰ was so firmly implanted in the Judaic thought that the idea of another God was wholly unacceptable. The concept of Jesus as God, in consequence, has kept many from accepting the Christian religion or of acknowledging its Founder as the Messiah. The understanding that Jesus, the man, presented, expressed the Christ-idea in incomparable fullness removes the difficulty, for it leaves untouched the main thesis of the Old Testament, one God and Father of all. This in itself is an accomplishment of modern revelation which is gradually gaining ground in liberal thought.

What is the significance of it all? Just this: Christ Jesus has made known to mortals the nature, character,

¹⁰ Deuteronomy 6:4.

and immanence of God. He has revealed the Christ as the ever-present Comforter, ready at hand and potent to the lifting of all burdens from needy humanity. He has mapped the Way of Life, has made plain the means of salvation, has revealed the real man in God's likeness. Surely none other has ever done so much. He is unknown only to those who know not the Christ, who have not made the acquaintance of the real man. He is known to all who have seen the Christ, and recognize the spiritual idea of Sonship.

“When Jesus our Great Master came
To teach us in his Father's name,
In every act, in every thought,
He lived the precepts which he taught.”

—Isaac Watts.

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